

INSPECTION REPORT

FOREST PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Cobridge, Hanley

LEA area: Stoke-on-Trent

Unique reference number: 123997

Headteacher: Mrs Jan Baggaley

Reporting inspector: Mr David Carrington
15414

Dates of inspection: 18th – 21st February 2002

Inspection number: 242900

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior and infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Woodall Street Off Waterloo Road Hanley Stoke-on-Trent
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr K Chawner
Date of previous inspection:	15 th September 1997

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1329	Mr Kevern Oliver	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils The partnership with parents and carers
1189	Mrs Sharon Brown	Team inspector	Art and design Music Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage Equal opportunities	
25623	Mr Ted Cox	Team inspector	English Physical education	The curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
7593	Mr John Collier	Team inspector	Mathematics Religious education	The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
22805	Mrs Jo Greer	Team inspector	Science Geography History Special educational needs English as an additional language	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Forest Park Primary School is located in the Cobridge district, about half a mile north west of Stoke-on-Trent city centre at Hanley. There are 140 boys and 120 girls in the school, including 25 children who attend the nursery full time. Most of the pupils come from the area around the school. There is an average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements. These needs are mainly related to dyslexia or emotional and behavioural concerns. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high and there is an above average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. There is a high proportion of pupils who join or leave the school part way through their primary education. When pupils start school their level of skill and knowledge is well below average. It is a member of a small Education Action Zone, which is focused on raising standards in literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology amongst other priorities.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Forest Park Primary School provides an effective education for its pupils. It is well led and managed by the headteacher who knows its strengths and weaknesses well and who has a clear vision of what needs to be improved. The school works hard to include pupils from many different backgrounds and strives to provide a welcoming, caring and supportive education for all. Standards are below average overall, but are improving steadily and pupils make satisfactory progress in school. Pupils respond well to the learning opportunities provided for them and teaching quality is sound. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is well led and managed by the popular and effective headteacher.
- Children get off to a good start in the nursery.
- The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and pupils who speak English as an additional language make good gains in their speaking, reading and writing by the time that they are eleven.
- Attitudes, behaviour, relationships and the personal development of pupils are all good.
- There are very good links with the community and with other schools in the area, and the school works hard to develop a profitable partnership with parents.
- The quality of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall.

What could be improved

- Standards are not high enough in English, mathematics, science, geography, history and religious education.
- Not all staff have an active enough role in procedures to check and evaluate standards and the quality of teaching and learning.
- There are inconsistencies and gaps to be filled in assessment.
- Target setting systems are at an early stage of development.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There were four key issues when the school was inspected in 1997:

1. Raise standards in English, mathematics and science, ensuring that more pupils achieved the higher levels in the national tests.
2. Improve standards in design and technology, geography, history and information technology.
3. Ensure that governors are more involved in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
4. Make the work for higher attaining pupils more challenging.

Since then, the school has made satisfactory progress with improvement. Work is still needed to raise standards, though they are now average by the age of eleven in mathematics, science, design and

technology and information and communication technology (ICT). Governors have better understanding of the school's performance, but there are still things to do in this aspect of their work. Higher attaining pupils are usually set work that provides appropriate challenge. The work of the Education Action Zone has been of benefit in making improvements to subjects such as English and ICT. The school has the potential to maintain a steady rate of improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	D	D	E	D
Mathematics	D	C	C	A
Science	E	C	D	B

Key

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

Similar schools are those schools with more than 50% of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In 2001, standards in the Year 6 national tests were average in mathematics, below average in science and well below average in English. When set against the results in schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, pupils at Forest Park did very well in mathematics, well in science and achieved average levels in English. In the same year, pupils in Year 2 achieved well below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, though these results matched the average of those in similar schools in reading and writing. They were below the similar schools' average in mathematics. Inspectors judge that standards in Year 6 this year are below average in English, geography, history and religious education. This is especially the case in writing in all four subjects. Standards are average in the other subjects, including mathematics, science and ICT. There are several significant factors that influence this pattern of standards. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high and these pupils have some difficulties attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and speaking in the infant classes. About a third of the pupils do not complete the whole of their primary education at the school and some leave before they take their national tests. Last year, several such pupils were expected to achieve respectable results in the national tests and the final results were not as high as expected because they left early. For the last few years, boys have not done as well as the girls in the national tests. However, inspectors judge that in lessons, boys and girls generally make similar progress in their studies. There has been a recent trend towards good improvement in standards and the school has had success in meeting the challenging targets that it has set.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils enjoy coming to school, are interested in the work and try hard to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour for the vast majority of pupils is good. The few difficult pupils are managed well by staff. There were seven temporary exclusions last year, all for good reasons.

Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are a strength of the school and pupils' development as individuals is well catered for. There is very good racial harmony in school.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. During the last full school year, attendance rates were well below average but they have improved well this year. Some pupils take holidays in term time and this interrupts their work.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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.

Inspectors observed 67 lessons during the week they were in school. There was some very good or excellent teaching quality and a little that was unsatisfactory. The scrutiny of pupils' past work confirms the picture of satisfactory teaching and learning in school. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught soundly. The best teaching, which is good, is to be found in the nursery and in Year 4. It is satisfactory in the other years in school. This is reflected in the progress that pupils make, which is good some years but not as brisk in others. Teachers' expectations and ongoing assessment are aspects for improvement, although the management of pupils is good. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are taught well, especially in later years of the juniors, and this enables them to make steady progress. Pupils generally learn soundly and build skills and knowledge at the expected rate. They work hard and concentrate satisfactorily.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is relevant and meets the needs of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Children in nursery and reception have a good curriculum, though there is some repetition in reception. The programme of activities outside lessons is good and there are very good links with the community and other local schools.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. These pupils make steady progress because the work in their individual education plans is well structured and non-teaching staff give good support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils who speak English as an additional language cope well with their work and they speak, read and write English as effectively as the other pupils by the time that they are eleven-years-old.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils know right from wrong and are thoughtful about other people. They mix well together, with good levels of racial harmony. They have good knowledge and understanding of their own cultural traditions and those of ethnic minority groups. Their spiritual development, whilst satisfactory, could be developed more across the curriculum and in assemblies.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school takes very successful steps to ensure that behaviour and attendance are improving all the time. It looks after the pupils well. Assessment procedures and the use of the information produced by assessment are inconsistent, though there is good potential in what has been established so far.
Partnership with parents	Good. Parents hold positive views of the school and when they are involved, have good impact on its work. The school produces very good quality information to keep parents informed about how well their children are doing.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher leads and manages the school well. She has a clear vision for the future, determination to succeed and is building a committed team of staff. Senior managers and coordinators are not yet fully involved in all management processes and do not have full knowledge of standards and the quality of provision in their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are proud of the school's successes and are very supportive. They ensure most statutory requirements are met. Governors do not yet use all the available information to evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The headteacher has good understanding of the school's performance. Other staff do not yet have such a complete over-view. The relatively new system of target setting and tracking has the potential to be helpful in ensuring the school upholds the principles of best value fully. However, there are things still to be done to ensure that timely action is taken to guarantee all pupils maintain their best progress.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Finance is well planned and managed and additional funds for boosting standards and for pupils with special educational needs, for example, are used well. There are good quality learning resources, enough staff for the work of the school and the accommodation is of very good quality.

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 coming to school. • Pupils build skills and knowledge effectively because of successful teaching. • The school is well led and managed and staff are easy to approach. • The school works closely with parents. • Pupils become mature and responsible learners. • Expectations are good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is nothing that most parents are worried about, though a few are concerned that the level of homework is inconsistent.

The inspection team agrees with most of the positive views of parents but judges that expectations could be higher. However, the team judges that levels of homework are generally appropriate.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 The 1997 inspection report painted a picture of average standards when children started school that were sustained at this level to the age of seven. However, eleven-year-old pupils were attaining at below average levels in most subjects. It was identified that not enough pupils achieved the higher level 5 in Year 6. Overall, lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who spoke English as an additional language made good progress. However, not enough progress was made in the skills of research and investigation. Three key issues related to standards and progress in 1997. These were the raising of standards in junior English, mathematics and science, the raising of overall standards in design and technology, geography, history and information technology and improving the achievement of higher attaining pupils. Much work has been done to improve standards and the school received the national achievement award for the improvements made during 1999-2000. The trend towards improved standards has been good over recent years.

2 The school's results in the 2001 Year 6 national tests were average in mathematics, below average in science and well below average in English. In comparison with schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, the standards were well above average in mathematics, above average in science and average in English.

3 Last year, pupils in Year 2 achieved well below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, though these results were average in relation to those in similar schools in reading and writing but below this average in mathematics.

4 The evidence of the current inspection points to standards in the current Year 6 that are below average in English, geography, history and religious education but average in the other subjects. Writing skills are not as well developed as in many primary schools and this affects standards in subjects where the recording of pupils' knowledge in written form is a key skill: geography, history and religious education. Whilst pupils' knowledge of geography and history facts is better now than in 1997, weaknesses in writing and research in these subjects restricts the level of attainment. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved well in the last five years because the level of resourcing and teachers' expertise have been advanced successfully. Similarly, standards in design and technology are now average, largely because of improvements to the curriculum that see pupils developing the full range of plan, design, make, evaluate and improve skills.

5 Within this pattern of attainment, several significant factors stand out: *There is a high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.* In general, these pupils make good progress. Some are in the higher attaining groups by the end of Year 6. However, younger pupils who have less fluent English achieve less well, particularly in the English national tests. Many of these pupils are at a much earlier stage in their development of English and their national test results across the board are below or well below average.

6 *There are 50 pupils on the register of pupils with special educational needs, four of whom have statements.* Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties, though a significant number have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils because they are well supported and their individual work programmes contain appropriate targets for learning that are implemented well.

7 *Higher attainers do not always do as well as might be expected.* The 2001 national test results in Year 2 showed that the proportion of pupils achieving level 3 was well below average overall in reading, writing and mathematics. Similarly, in Year 6, the results in the national tests were well below average in English and below average in maths and science. Evidence from the inspection indicates that there is not a consistent level of challenge for these pupils. In general, the expectations of higher attaining pupils are not spelled out clearly in planning and the work set is often little different from that for the other pupils. The school's target setting and tracking procedures are at an early stage of development and do not yet ensure that higher attainers are achieving at appropriate levels as a matter of course.

8 *There is considerable pupil mobility in school.* About a third of the pupils do not complete the whole of their primary education at the school and some leave before they take their national tests. For example, in 2001 the school expected better results in the national tests than were achieved. School records show that several pupils who were predicted to achieve average or above average results left before they took the Year 6 national tests. Because of the make-up of the area surrounding the school, several pupils who joined the school later in their primary school careers either had special educational needs related to moderate learning difficulties or were in the lower attaining group of pupils. The school has tracked the progress of pupils who complete their whole education at Forest Park and the trend is steady improvement and achievement of at least average standards overall.

9 *There is more underachievement amongst the boys than there is amongst the girls.* For the last four years, boys have not performed as well as the girls in the national tests in Year 2, however they gain ground in the juniors and in 2001 at least, boys did better than the girls in all three subjects tested. Overall, inspectors judge that the progress of boys and girls in lessons is little different. Occasionally, a few boys lose interest in the work and there may be minor misbehaviour, but teachers deal well with this and it does not significantly affect progress.

10 *Children have well below average levels of skills and knowledge when they start in the nursery.* Over recent years, the school has seen a decline in entry levels of skill and knowledge and much ground has to be made up in the Foundation Stage. Pupils make good progress in the nursery, but because some work is repeated in reception classes, it is satisfactory overall up to the end of the reception year. By the start of Year 1, attainment remains well below average in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. It is below average in the development of physical and creative skills. Children make good gains in their personal and social development.

11 *Because of the well below average level of knowledge and skills at the end of the reception year, pupils have much to accomplish in the infant and junior classes.* During the two infant years, progress is steady and standards improve, though they are still below average by the time pupils reach the age of seven. The same pattern of satisfactory progress and below average standards is in evidence in the four junior classes. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress from their first day to their last in school because standards improve, albeit not as much as the school wishes to achieve.

12 The school is in the process of establishing a system of target setting and tracking that will assist the focusing of planning, non-teaching staff support and assessment to ensure that each individual pupil does as well as possible. This is at an early stage of development but holds good promise for the future. At present, the system tends to be based on what has already been achieved, rather than anticipating what could be achieved. Further refinement of this system, allied to the completion of a consistent system of assessment for

all subjects and classes will do much to assist the school in its quest for even higher standards. There is good educational direction in school and staff work hard for improvement. The potential for higher standards is there.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13 The majority of Forest Park Primary's pupils like coming to school. They know that it is a safe place where they are looked after and can learn and play with their friends. They get on well with each other and their teachers. They are, with very few exceptions, polite to everyone who works with them. They really value the contribution which people other than their teachers make to their education. Their positive reactions to their lunchtime supervisors and the training sessions provided by Port Vale Football Club are good examples of this kind of appreciation.

14 Pupils enjoy learning and in the majority of lessons they get on with things. They are busy, attentive and work hard. In a Year 1 English lesson, for example, everyone sat quietly and concentrated as the teacher read a big book story and, as the end of the lesson approached, they urged her not to stop. In a Year 5 lesson on sound, pupils responded well to the challenge of scientific thinking and working on problems together and on their own.

15 Pupils know, understand and accept the school's behaviour and anti-bullying systems. They respond well to them and help to draw up their own class's rules at the beginning of each school year. As a result behaviour around the school and in the majority of lessons is good and pupils are able to get on with learning. Unfortunately, the bad behaviour of a very small number of pupils does, from time to time, have a negative effect on lessons because teachers have to devote too much time to sorting things out. Occasionally, when lessons are not sufficiently challenging, pupils' behaviour deteriorates, their attention wanders and they do not make much progress.

16 Playtime is the familiar mixture of boisterous running and chasing games. Football is confined to a fenced off area and there is plenty of space for those who just wish to walk, sit and chat. One lunchtime, during the inspection, pupils were unable to go out to play because it was raining. Behaviour then was very good. Pupils quietly played games, watched television, read, talked to their supervisors and occupied themselves in a variety of constructive ways.

17 Forest Park is proud of the fact that it is a tolerant, multi-racial community with 30 per cent of its pupils coming from ethnic minority groups. Pupils are kind to each other and accept each other for what they are. They tolerate those who have behaviour problems, for example. In the reception class pupils naturally helped a pupil who has special educational needs. In Year 2 circle time everyone listened quietly and respectfully as a pupil, for whom English is an additional language, described his best friend. Pupils are also pleased to see each other succeed, not only when their friends are awarded certificates for effort, good attendance and contributions to school life but also, in lessons. There was, for example, spontaneous applause during a Year 6 physical education lesson as individual pupils demonstrated what they could do.

18 Pupils enjoy responsibility. They fetch and carry registers, help prepare for lessons and assemblies and tidy up afterwards. Their school is clean, light and airy and they help to keep it that way. At lunchtimes older pupils help to clear tables and take turns in helping to bring younger pupils to and from the dining hall. They also spend time in the playground for nursery and reception children where they help to look after pupils and organise games for them.

19 Pupils with special educational needs respond well to the support they receive from learning support assistants and their class teachers. Pupils who display emotional and behavioural difficulties are generally well managed but sometimes cause disruption that affects their own learning and that of other pupils in the class. Pupils for whom English is an additional language respond very well to the language support provided both in the acquisition of English and in understanding class lessons.

20 Attendance has deteriorated since the previous inspection. During the last school year it was poor when compared with national averages. Since the start of the current school year however, there has been a real improvement, with absence rates dropping by a half. Punctuality is good with problems confined to a small group of pupils. During the last school year there were seven temporary exclusions.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21 In 1997, teaching was predominantly satisfactory, though unsatisfactory teaching was recorded in design and technology and history. Children in the nursery and reception classes were well taught, as were pupils with special educational needs. Since that time, the school has made some improvements to teaching and there is now more teaching that is good or better than in the past.

22 During the present inspection, 67 lessons were observed. Seven per cent of teaching was deemed to be unsatisfactory. These lessons were characterised by lack of pace, less than satisfactory management of pupils or the work for completion was identical for all pupils. In each case, pupils did not produce enough work, skills and knowledge were developed imperfectly and the behaviour of some pupils was unsatisfactory. In addition, there were concerns about safety in the unsatisfactory physical education (PE) lesson observed.

23 Of the rest, 12 per cent were of very good or excellent teaching quality. This is a higher proportion than in 1997, when there were no excellent lessons seen. In all, just over a half of all lessons were of good quality or better. The best teaching is to be found in the nursery and in Year 4, with satisfactory teaching in the other classes. The progress pupils make follows a similar pattern; that is to say, it is good in some years but not as brisk in others. When the statistics on teaching in the lessons observed are set beside the evidence obtained from the scrutiny of pupils' past work, it is evident that teaching is satisfactory across the school.

24 The teaching of children in the Foundation Stage is also satisfactory. Teaching is good in the nursery and satisfactory in the reception classes. Children are given a broad range of experiences that help them develop skills and knowledge satisfactorily. Progress is not as brisk in the reception classes because the activities provided in the nursery are sometimes repeated in reception with little extension of learning. Overall, staff in the Foundation Stage should build upon their knowledge and understanding of the 'stepping stones'¹ to ensure children reach the expected level in the early learning goals.

25 Teaching is also satisfactory in the two infant and four junior classes. Literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily through the school. Teachers manage their pupils well, despite some instances of less than satisfactory behaviour, and teaching methods are usually appropriate. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects taught are satisfactory in infant and junior classes. There has been good improvement to subject

¹ Stepping stones are the carefully graduated learning objectives that build up to the early learning goals in the six areas of learning for children in nursery and reception classes. See the section on 'Areas of Learning for Children in the Foundation Stage' for further discussion.

knowledge and confidence in ICT, which has resulted in improved provision, progress and standards. Staff development programmes have been particularly successful in this subject. Support staff frequently make a good contribution to teaching and learning. The nursery is staffed by non-teaching staff and good support is given to pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

26 Teachers and support staff show appropriate awareness of the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Good support is provided in lessons and tasks are modified for their ability level, particularly in English and mathematics sessions, but this is not consistent in other subjects or all classes. Teachers make good use of the available support. Learning assistants are briefed effectively by teachers so that their contribution to individual pupils' learning is good. Planning for pupils with special educational needs is directly linked to pupils' individual education plans; this is a good feature and contributes to these pupils making satisfactory progress overall.

27 A similar pattern of support exists for pupils who speak English as an additional language. The effective work done by support staff and teachers makes a good contribution to the good progress made. These pupils develop a fluency in English by the age of eleven that relates very well to their starting levels. Many of them begin school life with very little English, which hampers the progress they make. The planning of their work is thorough and well focused and there is good rapport between the pupils and the staff. Those who speak English as an additional language enjoy their work, are well motivated and concentrate well.

28 There are three related elements of teaching that are not as polished as those discussed above. Firstly, teachers' expectations vary. They are good for pupils with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and in the nursery. They are not high enough for pupils in the higher attaining groups. These pupils are not challenged consistently by their work and some of it is similar to that set for others, thus restricting the development of more advanced skills of reasoning and research, for example. Low expectations are also sometimes seen where the pace of lessons is too slack and where minor misbehaviour goes unchecked for too long.

29 Secondly, the level of expectation of different attainment groups is not always well represented in planning. In general, teachers work hard at their planning and it is completed thoroughly. However, the exact knowledge, skills and understanding to be learned in lessons, as opposed to the activities to be taught, are not identified consistently. Thirdly, the marking of work and the oral sharing of evaluations of pupils' progress are not focused enough on the targets and learning objectives set for the pupils.

30 The school has some difficulties in arranging supply cover in the case of staff absence and does not find it easy to recruit support staff to work with particular groups of pupils such as those with special educational needs. On occasion, supply staff have not been as effective teachers as the permanent staff, and this has had an impact on the progress made in the classes affected.

31 Learning follows a similar pattern to teaching. Pupils build skills and knowledge satisfactorily and work hard enough. They produce satisfactory amounts of work, though more effort could be given to handwriting and presentation. Levels of concentration are sound, pupils listen attentively in the main and are motivated towards their work. They could be provided with more opportunities for research and investigation in subjects such as geography, history and science and otherwise encouraged to show more independence and responsibility as they work. To this end, opportunities for the self-assessment and review of achievement by pupils are few.

32 The school has some excellent models of teaching and learning to build upon. However, monitoring systems are not yet identifying these quickly enough. During the current inspection, excellent lessons were seen in Years 4 and 6, with very good teaching observed in the nursery and Years 2 and 5. In the excellent Year 6 English lesson observed, it was evident that the teacher had very good subject knowledge and that she analysed pupils' work very effectively as they completed their tasks. Good pointers for improvement were given to the pupils as they worked very hard to use appropriate punctuation for reported speech and generally strove to improve characterisation in writing. The inspector was impressed by the high expectations demonstrated by the teacher – the pace was very brisk, behaviour was spot-on and the teaching was focused on skill and knowledge development. The quality of writing was much improved on the pupils' previous best efforts: "...if Sally was the heart of the outfit, Mac was the brains..." The teacher was very successful in encouraging the pupils to move their style forward when they experienced difficulties of phrase or punctuation. The characteristics of this lesson are evident in other classes. The school does not have far to look as it seeks to further enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

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

33 The school teaches all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education for an appropriate amount of time. The curriculum for children in reception and nursery classes has a number of strengths and is good overall, though there is some repetition in reception. Pupils' intellectual, moral and physical developments are promoted effectively. Good provision is made for pupils' personal, social and health education. Relevant programmes are provided for sex and health education and awareness of the misuse of drugs. These aspects are taught effectively through science and a programme for personal and social education. Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural education is good. It is satisfactory for spiritual development. Satisfactory provision is made to ensure that all pupils have equal access to everything the school provides and opportunities to succeed. There is good provision for out-of-school activities.

34 The National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy have been successfully introduced. The school has satisfactory strategies for teaching numeracy and literacy skills. Teachers have identified the need to focus on improving writing skills. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to write independently or to write at length in subjects such as history, geography and religious education. The attention paid to the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation is inconsistent.

35 The school provides good quality education for pupils with special educational needs. Their work is well planned and matches the requirements of their individual education plans. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also study from a good curriculum and sometimes make very good progress in the development of their English skills because the work is well matched to their needs. Higher attaining pupils are often set work that is similar to that studied by the others and this reduces the progress that they make.

36 There is good provision for personal, social and health education throughout the school. Health matters, including sex and drugs education, are taught through science lessons and are increasingly becoming part of discussions specifically aimed to raise concerns about personal, social and health education. Discussions focus on relationships and caring for each other. The school nurse talks about puberty and parents are given the opportunity to borrow the materials used by the school to teach sex education. Pupils learn about drugs misuse having been taught to distinguish between medicines and harmful substances. Work on drugs education is supported by visits from the Life Education team.

Parents are invited to join in with these visits and the community police officer follows them up with a talk about drugs.

37 The provision for out-of-school activities is good. Pupils take part in football, athletics and rounders matches. There is a good programme of after-school clubs, covering activities as varied as keep-fit, art, sport, drama, boxed games, recorders and computers. Funds obtained from the Education Action Zone enable pupils to take part in homework clubs.

38 Pupils' education is enriched by visits to local places of interest such as museums, an old bone mill and Festival Park. Visitors to the school have included the school nurse and paramedic officers, a theatre group, music instructors and artists. Actors dressed as Vikings worked with eight-year-olds on their history topic and a road safety officer gives instruction to eleven-year-olds. Representatives from the local church and mosque talk to pupils and a parent has shown Asian dresses.

39 The community makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning and this has good impact on the curriculum and the progress that pupils make. Foundation Stage children buy ingredients for cooking from local shops. Pupils sing carols at Christmas in homes for the aged and distribute food collected for the Harvest Festival service to a home for the mentally handicapped. They helped to design Prospect Park, planted bulbs and seeds and worked with other schools to make planters. Pupils learn about the history of the pottery industry when they are taken on conducted bus tours. The local Rotary Club has painted a large mural in the school hall.

40 The establishment of the Education Action Zone has brought benefits to the school by enabling it to extend the links it makes with the community and partner institutions, which are also very good. Very good links are established with the local secondary school and other primary schools. Pupils visit the secondary school, which most will attend after primary school. Groups of teachers from local schools meet together regularly and links have been set up with local businesses. The Education Action Zone funds residential visits to the Kingswood Centre for gifted and talented pupils and workshops are held for those pupils at the secondary school. Good links have been established with a special school and this has assisted the training of a member of staff to support an autistic pupil. The school already had links with Port Vale Football Club but these have now improved so that pupils receive coaching and visit the football club to watch matches.

41 In the main, the school ensures that all pupils have equality of access to the full range of learning opportunities provided. Some pupils are withdrawn from various lessons in order to provide additional support in literacy and numeracy, for example through booster groups and additional literacy groups. Small groups of pupils are regularly withdrawn from assemblies and collective worship for such support. This withdrawal has helped these pupils make improved progress and the school takes appropriate steps to ensure that they do not miss anything of consequence.

42 The school makes good overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. At the time of the last inspection, this provision was commended as a strength of the school and it continues to be an aspect of its work that is delivered admirably.

43 Provision for the pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. They are taught to respect the feelings and beliefs of others through religious education (RE) lessons and as part of the programme of work for their personal and social development. Year 2 pupils, for example, consider the importance of saying sorry when someone's feelings are hurt. Assemblies, however, do not always promote spiritual development satisfactorily. Some do not meet the requirements that require an act of worship during the assembly. On two

occasions, pupils were not offered the opportunity to pray or reflect on what they had experienced. The whole school only meets together on one day each week. On the other four days there are separate assemblies for the infants and the juniors. Opportunities for the whole school family to meet together regularly are therefore missed. During the assemblies, it is difficult to create a quiet, reflective atmosphere because other pupils are working in the nearby classrooms and sometimes moving through the hall. Music is not used as pupils enter and leave to create a particular mood and no hymns or songs were included in the assemblies during the inspection, except in those specifically designated as 'song practices'. Nevertheless, assemblies are properly planned around a series of themes and draw on stories from around the world and from different faiths to illustrate particular moral messages or to celebrate particular festivals. One good assembly centred on the story of Zacchaeus to illustrate how a dishonest person can reform. Pupils were involved in acting out the story and there was a prolonged period of silence when pupils were invited to reflect on the message that they had heard, followed by a prayer addressed to God.

44 Provision for the moral development of pupils is good, promoting a clear sense of right and wrong. School and individual class rules are displayed prominently and are understood by everyone. Year 3 pupils, for example, understood the class rules that had not been properly obeyed when they reviewed the previous day's lessons. Teachers consistently reward good work and behaviour and pupils' efforts are recognised during a weekly assembly. Sanctions too are properly applied for unacceptable behaviour and are effective. Moral dilemmas are explored during assemblies and in 'circle time' discussions. Year 6 pupils, for example, discuss the consequences of breaking the law or taking illegal drugs. Regular charity collections help pupils to focus on the needs of others.

45 Provision for pupils' social development is good. In lessons, they generally co-operate well, in pairs in Year 6, for example, researching the events of Jesus' life from the Bible during an RE lesson. Pupils have responsibilities in their classes such as preparing the room for lessons at the start of the day by putting out chairs. Older pupils have school jobs such as preparing the overhead projector when it is needed in assembly. They carry out their duties conscientiously. Outside lessons, there are many opportunities to socialise in a variety of settings: in after-school clubs, during a residential visit for the oldest pupils and during educational visits, for example, to a nearby museum for a history topic.

46 There is good provision for developing pupils' cultural awareness. They learn about past and present British culture through history and geography topics. Knowledge of the local area is particularly strong because there are rich resources close by that provide inspiration for a study of Josiah Wedgwood in Year 6, for example. Enthusiasm for the local football club is promoted by visits to the ground and by players to the school who enhance the curriculum for Year 5 pupils during a PE lesson. Understanding of other beliefs, traditions and values amongst communities in this country and abroad is well promoted. Festivals from different faiths are celebrated – with a Christmas and an Eid party, for example. A particularly colourful and informative display in the entrance hall is testimony to the interest in the Chinese New Year created amongst the younger children. Pupils visit the local church and mosque as part of their work in RE that introduces them to Christian, Islamic and Jewish beliefs and customs. Visitors, too, provide good opportunities for pupils to appreciate the wider world. An 'artist in residence' is a regular feature and other visitors, such as Afro-Caribbean musician, make a lasting impression and inspire enthusiasm amongst the pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47 The governors and staff of Forest Park Primary take very good care of all their pupils. Parents and pupils are well aware that this is the case. The school is safe and secure and very clean and tidy. It is litter and graffiti free. The governors, headteacher and caretaker

make frequent safety inspections of the whole site and the local authority and fire brigade make regular checks as well. Risk assessment procedures are good and cover all aspects of school life, including trips out.

48 The school pays great attention to the health and welfare of all its pupils in order to ensure that they make the best possible use of their time in school. There are two qualified first aiders on site throughout the school day and all staff have had basic first aid training. Accident and incident records are clear, detailed and up to date. Child protection arrangements are good: the school works very closely with the appropriate local agencies and all staff have had appropriate training.

49 Forest Park Primary has comprehensive behaviour management and anti-bullying policies and systems. They work well and are accepted by both pupils and parents. They are consistently applied across the whole school and are particularly effective in dealing with the problems of the small group of pupils who are occasionally badly behaved and cause disruption. Every class has its own rules prominently displayed on the walls.

50 Teachers value their pupils and know them very well. Generally they use praise and other rewards to encourage pupils to work hard and give their best. A system of points and certificates is used by teachers and the lunchtime supervisors to recognise good results in all aspects of school life. The weekly praise assemblies are major events at which the whole school celebrates major achievements in work, attendance and behaviour.

51 Systems of assessment are in the course of development. There are satisfactory procedures to check progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but in other subjects there is much less consistency. The school is working to develop means of assessment of skills in a number of subjects, but in many cases, the assessment of skills is left to the individual teacher. The information produced by assessment is interpreted thoroughly and is used to set targets for individuals and groups of pupils. These targets tend to be forecasts of what pupils might achieve in twelve months' time and do not reflect enough what the school intends to do to improve standards even more. The targets are not yet dovetailed enough into planning procedures, the marking of work or the deployment of support staff to help particular pupils, whether higher, lower or middle attaining. The information from assessment is also used inconsistently in subsequent planning. Often, higher attaining pupils are set similar work as that for all other pupils, for example. School managers are aware of these discrepancies and have firm plans to build on the start made to form a systematic system of assessment and target setting that will ensure all pupils make consistent progress.

52 One strength of assessment concerns the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. These have clearly defined targets that are regularly monitored to ensure that they are achieved at an appropriate level. Reviews of individual education plans and statements of need are carried out at the appropriate times. Parents are involved in the reviews of formal statements of need and copies of individual education plans are given to parents. These include ways in which parents may support their children at home. Parents of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties are closely involved in managing these pupils. Support from the appropriate outside agencies is regularly sought including the valuable assistance of the local home liaison worker.

53 The school is very concerned about the negative impact which poor attendance and punctuality have on pupils' progress. It therefore has very good systems for monitoring and improving attendance. Record keeping is first class. There is a first day follow-up system, a range of imaginative incentive schemes including congratulatory postcards and entries into a prize draw for seats at the local theatre. There is very close liaison with the education welfare

officer and, in extreme cases, the legal system is used. The result of all this activity is that since the beginning of the current school year there has been a 50 per cent reduction in absences and problems with punctuality are now largely confined to a small group of pupils. The school tries its best to dissuade parents from taking holidays during term time but recognises that sometimes it is unavoidable. It accepts, for example, that extended trips to Pakistan are necessary for those who need to visit their families there. In these cases it works hard to minimise the impact by providing programmes of work and suggesting holiday timings which keep absences to a minimum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

54 Parents have confidence in Forest Park Primary School. They believe that it is a happy and caring school, which is helping their children to learn and develop. They appreciate the staff's supportive and approachable attitudes towards them. They know that their queries and concerns will be dealt with. They have confidence in the headteacher and feel that the school is well managed.

55 Forest Park's staff and governors are committed to the idea of parents and school working in partnership to help pupils learn and develop. Recently, therefore, with the help of the local school liaison officer, they have set up a number of parent-school schemes which are intended to bring more parents closer to the school. Examples of this are the imminent "reading at bedtime" week and courses, for which parents have asked, on subjects as varied as computing, mathematics for parents for whom English is a second language, literacy, and aromatherapy. The school listens to parents and, at their suggestion, is setting up a cycling proficiency scheme for pupils. Four parents are training to be instructors for the scheme.

56 The majority of parents sign up to the home-school agreement. They know and understand why the headteacher and staff will not tolerate bad behaviour being brought into school. As a result they all support the special behaviour contract, which was introduced as part of a successful drive to improve the overall standard of behaviour inside school.

57 The school's prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are full of useful information about all aspects of school life. Parents like the regular newsletters about what is going on in the school and the special information sheets which tell them what their children are learning.

58 There are two consultation evenings per year, which parents say are "really helpful". One meeting is in the autumn and the other is in the summer term, just after the end of year reports have been sent home. Approximately 80 per cent of parents attend these meetings and the school tries hard to reach the rest through a variety of informal means. Every term a week's worth of each pupil's work, which has been assessed by teachers, is sent home so that parents can see at first hand the quality of their children's work and the progress that they are making. Included in the folder are targets for every subject in the curriculum. Parents like these folders.

59 The end-of-year reports, which parents like because they are "accurate portraits", are comprehensive. They cover progress and achievements across the curriculum. The information about English, mathematics and science is particularly detailed and includes targets for improvement and development. There is space, which some use, for parents to write their own comments on their children's progress.

60 Interpreters are always on hand to help parents for whom English is an additional language. The parents of pupils who have special educational needs receive comprehensive

reports on their children's progress. They are encouraged to take the fullest possible part in planning their children's education.

61 The school operates an open door policy. Teachers can be contacted in the morning, before school starts and parents call in to discuss problems and check up on things. The headteacher is out in the playground, meeting, greeting and listening to parents at the end of every school day. A number of parents make use of the Friday morning 'surgery sessions' which are run in the school by the local home-school liaison officer.

62 There is a small parents and friends association at Forest Park Primary that organises fundraising events. Parents are very supportive of these events, such as the Christmas Fair and sports day and they help out on school trips. They also attend the praise assemblies. A small and dedicated group of parents and friends regularly work in the school as volunteer helpers in classrooms. Some of these parents as a result of their work in the nursery and the school's encouragement, have gone on to achieve formal qualifications in child care and nursery nursing.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

63 Leadership and management were judged to be effective in the 1997 report. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors formed a good team who set a clear course for improvement in school. The key issue relating to management stressed the need for governors to have a stronger role in the monitoring of school performance. Resources, including finance were managed well and the school gave satisfactory value for money.

64 The headteacher continues to give a strong steer to the school. She has firm priorities for improvement and knows what she wants the school to be. Her level of determination is good and she knows the school's strengths and weaknesses well. The deputy headteacher complements the headteacher well. Together, they are an effective influence on what the school achieves. Thus, the leadership of key managers is good.

65 Senior managers and subject coordinators have seen a gradual strengthening of their role in the last five years. All staff show commitment to improvement and all work hard to complete their management tasks. However, not all have a full understanding of the strengths and shortcomings of the subjects that they co-ordinate. This is due to the current state of development of the monitoring, assessment and target setting and tracking processes in school.

66 The co-ordinator for special education needs is fully conversant with the current code of practice and the changes incorporated in the new code. Plans are in hand to begin implementing the new code of practice from the beginning of the summer term. The co-ordinator is conscientious and is managing the provision for these pupils effectively. However, she also has a number of other demanding responsibilities and does not have enough non-contact time to undertake these roles as well as she wishes.

67 The management of the provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is good. The staff involved are well experienced and give good support. The work is well focused on the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Many of the younger ones are at an early stage of English acquisition and their needs are also managed well. The pupils make very good progress in developing fluency in English.

68 Governors have improved their awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are well involved in the work and life of the school and many are regular visitors during the school day. They are very supportive of staff and the pupils and are proud

of the school's work. Governors ensure most statutory requirements are met. In analysing the performance of the school, governors generally use the evaluations made by the headteacher and officers of the local education authority. They do not themselves use and interpret the original sources of information, such as the annual analysis of results in the national tests, in a bid to identify just how well the school is doing and what elements of standards need improving. There is, however, the will to take on this role and governors make good use of the training opportunities made available.

69 The headteacher has good knowledge and understanding of how well the school is doing in relation to other schools, both locally and further afield. Her analysis of performance data is thorough and is the basis of useful reports to governors and staff. This gives others insights into school performance, but not complete understanding. The tracking systems in place to ensure pupils meet the targets set for them are incomplete. At present, targets are based on past performance in national tests and other end of year assessments. They are mostly forecasts of attainment in twelve month' time and do not reflect enough the value that the school intends to add to pupils' achievements. The mechanism to make regular checks that pupils are on-target to meet these expectations is not fully in place. This means that arrested progress or particularly good achievement is not always identified quickly enough. School managers are aware that the target setting process requires enhancement and have some helpful ideas to take this forward, including more widespread involvement of all staff in developing and honing the systems of assessment and target setting.

70 Monitoring systems are similarly developed. Not all coordinators have had opportunity to monitor standards, progress, teaching and the curriculum in other classes. Additionally, the cycle of monitoring in place will take too long to complete. The gaps between monitoring in individual subjects have the potential to allow shortcomings to remain, rather than be eliminated promptly. Subject coordinators are ready for the additional responsibilities that more rigorous and inclusive monitoring will bring and many look forward to contributing more to the effective management of the school.

71 The school implements the principles of best value satisfactorily. Continued improvements to the monitoring and target setting process will enable it to meet these even more successfully. For the present, finance is well planned, managed and administered. Governors have good oversight of the school's finances and the school development plan is closely allied to the budget. The most recent audit of finances was very positive, with the very few, and minor, recommendations implemented speedily and effectively. The relatively sizeable carry-forward in the budget is earmarked for the maintenance of current staffing levels as the school roll continues to decline and for development of the outdoor space to provide a vibrant resource for learning. The school makes good use of the additional funds it receives for supporting pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language and for boosting standards in literacy and numeracy. The quality of learning resources is good. Links with Port Vale Football Club and the Education Action Zone have brought benefits to the school as it has worked to improve provision, particularly in resources for ICT. There are enough staff, teaching and non-teaching, to meet the needs of the pupils and the accommodation is of very good quality.

72 The school provides satisfactory value for money for the above average amount it spends on each pupil. Pupils make sound progress through the school because the quality of teaching and learning is sound. The prospects for future improvement are positive because managers know what has to be achieved and staff are determined to meet the school's priorities.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

73 The school has made satisfactory improvement overall since it was inspected in 1997 and the staff and governors want to make even greater improvement in the future. The school succeeds in its mission to be a caring, welcoming place. In order to give its pupils the best possible education, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

1 Continue to improve standards in English, mathematics, science, geography, history and religious education.

By:

- Raising expectations of all groups of pupils, especially to provide more challenge for higher attaining pupils;
- Ensuring that appropriate work is set for pupils of different attainment levels.
- Including all pupils in discussion and question-based sessions;
- Creating more opportunities for independent writing across the school and in all subjects, particularly geography, history and religious education;
- Giving consistent attention to the development of good handwriting and presentation skills;
- Encouraging more speed in mental mathematics;
- Promoting independent work in scientific investigation, experiment and evaluation sessions;
- Using mathematical skills and knowledge more in science;
- Giving more opportunity for research and investigation in subjects such as geography and history.

See paragraphs: 4, 7-8, 28-9, 31, 34-5, 51, 76, 82, 84, 89, 94-6, 98-9, 101, 104-6, 108, 110, 113-4, 123, 130, 134, 136-9, 143 and 162-3.

2 Enhance the existing procedures to monitor standards and the quality of teaching and learning.

By:

- Involving all staff in the monitoring process;
- Accelerating the cycle of monitoring and providing regular opportunities for staff to monitor their subjects;
- Including the scrutiny of work and planning in the monitoring process;
- Making sure that all the available curriculum time is used fully, especially in the provision of music and during registration sessions;
- Monitoring assemblies to ensure they have a suitable spiritual dimension and that they always conform to statutory requirements;
- Ensuring that there are rigorous criteria for monitoring;
- Evaluating the outcomes of monitoring;
- Informing staff of the results of this evaluation;
- Making changes to practice to ensure that best practice is shared effectively;
- Checking that these changes are working well.

See paragraphs: 32, 41, 43, 65, 70-1, 101, 110, 112, 117-8, 123, 128, 133, 140, 148, 150-2, 157 and 164.

3. Maintain efforts to develop a system of assessment that is consistent across the school and all subjects and ensure that the results of assessment are used fully in planning subsequent work.

By:

- Ensuring that skills are assessed consistently in foundation subjects;
- Using the outcomes of assessment to include specific learning outcomes for different attainment groups in planning;
- Providing appropriate work for pupils of different attainment levels;
- Including National Curriculum levels in medium term planning and the assessment folders.

See paragraphs: 7-8, 12, 28, 31, 35, 51-2, 65, 69, 76, 96, 101, 110, 116-7, 123, 128-9, 132, 139, 148, 152, 157 and 164

4. Refine and improve the existing target setting systems.

By:

- Involving all staff in the target setting and tracking process;
- Ensuring that progress is on track to meet the targets throughout the year;
- Making sure that challenging targets are set for higher attaining pupils;
- Identifying gifted and talented pupils and setting appropriate targets for them;
- Adapting the use of comments when marking work to reflect the targets for individual pupils;
- Sharing with the pupils the particular knowledge and skills to be learned in lessons;
- Involving pupils themselves in the review of the outcomes of learning at the end of sessions.

See paragraphs: 7, 12, 29, 31, 51-2, 65, 69, 71, 82, 99, 101, 108, 122 and 148

Lesser issues for the governors to include in their action plan:

Continuing to promote improved levels of attendance.

See paragraphs: 20 and 53.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	67
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	6	27	27	5	0	0
Percentage	3	9	40.5	40.5	7	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

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)	25	235
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		147

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		55

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	43

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	49
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	35

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.5

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.3

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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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
	2001	19	15	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	12	13
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	22	24	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	65 (75)	76 (55)	68 (80)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	14	11
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	22	26	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	65 (75)	76 (55)	68 (80)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	11	13	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	11	11
	Girls	7	9	10
	Total	13	20	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	54 (70)	83 (70)	88 (85)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	10	10
	Girls	7	7	8
	Total	13	17	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	54 (59)	71 (63)	75 (74)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	7
Indian	4
Pakistani	29
Bangladeshi	9
Chinese	0
White	126
Any other minority ethnic group	6

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	6	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27.6
Average class size	29.4

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	247.6

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

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

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	73.4

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8.3
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	533709
Total expenditure	52875
Expenditure per pupil	2042
Balance brought forward from previous year	72490
Balance carried forward to next year	77324

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	258
Number of questionnaires returned	59

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	34	5	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	58	41	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	47	7	2	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	46	14	0	3
The teaching is good.	68	32	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	37	10	2	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	17	5	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	31	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	54	31	12	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	58	34	0	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	39	7	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	35	2	4	19

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

74. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, but it is good for children in the nursery. Satisfactory provision has been maintained since the previous inspection. The nursery, in particular, is a strength of the school. Children are admitted to the nursery on a full-time basis, following their third birthday. They join the reception classes at the start of the school year in which they become five years old. At the time of the inspection there were 26 children attending the nursery, although there is capacity for 52, with a further 51 children in the two mixed reception/Year 1 classes. Early assessment and other information indicate that attainment on entry to school is well below the expected level for children of this age. In spite of satisfactory progress overall, which is accelerated in the nursery, attainment remains well below the expected levels in communication, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world at the end of the Foundation Stage. It is below the expected level in creative and physical development. However, in personal, social and emotional development, children make good gains in their learning and the majority achieve the early learning goals by the time they start in Year 1.

75. Early identification of children having special educational needs enables support to be targeted appropriately. The good provision for these children enables them to make steady progress in their learning. Similarly, those children with English as an additional language receive effective help from the appropriate support staff. They too make steady gains in their acquisition of language, skills and other learning. Good and often good teaching in the nursery gets most children off to a flying start. The pace slackens in the reception classes at times, but nevertheless children make steady progress as a result of mostly satisfactory teaching. Occasionally teaching is unsatisfactory. The children experience a broad range of interesting activities. In the nursery, these are usually of a high quality with very effective support. This is sometimes the case in lessons in the reception classes, but progress is affected because activities planned in the nursery are too often repeated with the children in the reception classes instead of extending the learning further. This is because teachers do not have a secure enough grasp of the stepping stones to the early learning goals². The adults plan together and this is good practice, but more account needs to be taken of what children know and can do by the time they leave the nursery and join the reception classes.

76. Expectations are not always high enough in reception. As a result some children, particularly higher attainers, underachieve because the tasks do not always offer the right level of challenge for all. Where tasks are interesting and challenging, the children are well motivated. The brisk pace in the good lessons accelerates children's learning. There is a consistent approach to assessment in the Foundation Stage, but it is not always used effectively to determine the next steps of learning in the reception classes. The very good curriculum experiences in the nursery are sometimes repeated in reception. This does not allow children to make consistent progress.

77. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. They are good in the nursery, making an effective contribution to children's learning. However, the range and quality of outdoor resources are limited particularly for older children in the Foundation Stage and do not promote thinking and physical skills as well as they could do. There are plans to improve this.

² Stepping stones are the carefully graduated learning objectives that build up to the early learning goals in the six areas of learning for children in nursery and reception classes.

78. Since the previous inspection the curriculum for the Foundation Stage has been successfully implemented, although it does not always take enough account of the early learning goals when planning for progression from the nursery to the reception year. There are better opportunities for children to select activities and resources for themselves, building greater independence. Simple targets are set for individual children using the outcomes of assessment analysis. Further work is needed to ensure that these are meaningful goals, which are regularly reviewed. Good use is made of the 'stepping stones' as a record of assessment. The adults work together as an effective team, all being clear about their roles and responsibilities. Such improvements have made an effective contribution to children's learning.

Personal, social and emotional development

79. Teaching in this area of learning is good. The children have positive attitudes to learning and are happy to come to school. They develop confidence, for example through self-registration on arrival in their class, and move confidently to their chosen activity. They learn to share and take turns when using tools in the sand or co-operating when playing with the garage. Most children are friendly and behave well. They enjoy good relationships with the adults and with each other. A significant proportion are still developing their listening skills and learning to carry out instructions obediently. Most children are eager to respond to questions but a significant number lack the skills to engage in discussion and remain silent at these times. The good support given by the adults helps to build confidence and self-esteem, and ensures that all children understand and are able to participate fully in all of the activities. Praise is used regularly to encourage and value children's contributions. For example, in the 'newsroom' when reading the weather report on television, shy and quiet children would take the microphone and attempt to give the weather news, putting symbols on a map of the British Isles. The teacher enthused over their reporting and encouraged other children to respond positively too as they watched each other on the television screen.

80. Most children move confidently about the classroom, the outdoor play area and into the hall for physical development. Improvements in planning enable the children to select activities independently, although some older children in the Foundation Stage are still learning to tidy away their equipment at the end of an activity, and to treat equipment with respect. Those children having special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are well supported, helping them to make the same progress as others. Many children are likely to achieve the expected level by the time they enter Year 1.

Communication, language and literacy

81. Skills in this area of development are well below the level expected when children first start school. Good teaching in the nursery builds confidence and enables many children to make good progress in their acquisition of language skills. A strength of the provision in the nursery is the effective teamwork of the adults who focus on language development. This underpins all work in the nursery. In a very good lesson, children shared the story of the bear hunt and a well structured activity enabled them to role-play the story using 'small world' figures. The children have many opportunities to speak to adults and other children in the class. Nevertheless, a significant proportion remain well below average in their speaking and listening skills when they join the reception classes. They make steady progress here as a result of satisfactory teaching, but listening skills remain a weakness for a number of children who do not listen carefully and follow instructions straight away.

82. Children enjoy listening to stories and most children handle books carefully. Higher attainers in reception are beginning to read the early books in the scheme and average children are able to recognise a few words. A weakness in the reception classes is the

development of writing skills. Opportunities for purposeful writing activities are limited and the teaching of these skills is unsatisfactory. Initial sound recognition is weak and few children are able to form their letters correctly. Many children are still unable to write their name independently. Insufficient attention is given to the development of basic writing skills so that a significant number of children have poor pencil control. Writing is not valued through marking. A more systematic approach is needed with well structured writing opportunities planned within the role-play activities. The development of writing is at a very early stage for most children. Skills in this area of learning remain well below the expected level. Few children are likely to achieve the early learning goals by the time they leave the reception classes.

Mathematical development

83. Attainment in this area of development is well below the level expected for children by the end of reception. Most children count to 5 and more able children count beyond this, counting reliably to 10. Some children understand 'one more than'. Many children are not secure in their recognition of numerals and skills in the formation of numbers are weak by the time the children leave the reception classes. A significant number of children are unsure of repeating patterns. Opportunities for problem solving are limited. Higher-attaining children recognise common two-dimensional shapes and show awareness of some solid shapes. Activities exploring the sand and water enable pupils to acquire and extend their mathematical vocabulary, understanding terms such as 'full', 'empty', 'more' and 'less'. Good use is made of songs and number rhymes in the nursery to reinforce early number recognition. Although this continues in the reception class it is often a repetition of rhymes used in the nursery instead of building on this early work. The good teaching in the nursery and sound teaching in the reception classes result in satisfactory gains in learning overall. Nevertheless, standards remain well below the expected level.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

84. When children start school their knowledge and understanding of the world is well below the expected level. Good teaching and a well structured range of practical experiences help the children to make good gains in their learning in the nursery. Activities linked to a topic on weather enable the children to make and test wind toys, with great enthusiasm, such as windmills and kites. They explore bubbles outside and experiment with switches and lights in the dark 'bears' cave'. Some of these tasks are repeated in the reception classes. For example, children use wind toys and bubbles as in the nursery, instead of developing these skills towards the early learning goals. Other activities in the reception classes are well structured. For example, the children make ice cream and mix instant whip. They explore different kinds of fruit and test different materials to find the most suitable to make an umbrella for the teddy, some sunglasses and wellingtons. In these lessons good links are made to literacy as teachers extend children's understanding of vocabulary such as 'waterproof', 'transparent', 'opaque' and 'absorbent'. Effective questioning by teachers increases children's knowledge and understanding. Role-play activities such as the weather station, the medical centre and the bears' cave promote scientific learning well, although greater links to literacy could be made in some of these activities through well structured early writing opportunities in the reception classes.

85. In the water tray, children acquire scientific knowledge of floating and sinking, and explore the properties of different materials when placed in water. When making ice cream and instant whip, the children observe change and are encouraged to explain what is happening. When using the computer, many pupils show the expected level of skill to control the mouse and move the cursor. Very good attention is given to festivals and celebrations such as Chinese New Year in the Foundation Stage. The children make masks, try out Chinese food, experiment with Chinese writing and perform dragon dances. The very good

display includes a wide range of creative experiences and provides a rich resource to promote speaking skills and extend children's knowledge and understanding. This is particularly effective in the nursery where high quality activities result from the exciting display. Many of the activities are repeated in the reception classes, and as a result, do not extend the learning as well as they could if planning took account of the need to extend and challenge further. Attainment remains below the expected level at the end of the Foundation Stage, but most children make satisfactory gains in their learning overall.

Physical development

86. Attainment in this area of learning is below the level expected for children of this age. Most children make steady gains in their learning overall. In the nursery, many make good gains in their learning as a result of good teaching. For example, well structured use of the apparatus in a good lesson, took the children on a bear hunt, climbing over, under and through a range of obstacles which reflected and reinforced the story very well. The lesson motivated children well. The good role models provided by the adults ensured all children understood what they had to do. A significant number of children lack good coordination and control, particularly when balancing and jumping on and off the apparatus. The learning was enhanced as a result of imaginative use of resources and effective teamwork. Sound teaching in the reception class consolidates these early skills. The children move in a variety of ways, stretching and curling as they act out the story of 'The Snowman'. Many children are very immature in their movements and need considerable help to use the space appropriately and carry out the instructions. In one reception class, the lesson was enhanced through the use of music, ribbons and tinsel shakers. For other children in the reception year there are missed opportunities to make the learning more exciting and purposeful. The nursery makes good use of the outdoor area using wheeled vehicles, but the area is not very imaginative, and does not provide good opportunities for extending physical skills such as climbing. It is used by the reception children to a lesser extent but there is little provision through planning or resourcing to ensure good progression in learning. Support staff make an effective contribution to learning, and help to ensure all children are fully included. Fine motor skills are underdeveloped for a significant number of children. Pencil control and the use of scissors, crayons and brushes highlight the weaknesses in these skills.

Creative development

87. When children start school, skills in this area of learning are below the expected level and well below for a significant minority of children. The good opportunities in the nursery for children to paint, model, draw and use collage and construction result in good progress for many children. These skills are built upon satisfactorily in the reception classes, but too often repetition of nursery tasks prevents the learning from being better. In the nursery, the range of learning experiences is extensive. During their work on the Chinese New Year, the children make observational drawings of bamboo, cut Chinese lanterns and paint Chinese flowers onto silk. They thread beads in repeating patterns, cut and stick blossom trees and experiment with Chinese writing. Painted dragons and attractive animal masks involve a wide range of skills. Weather paintings, winter collages and rainstorm pictures support the topic work on the weather. The children use recycled material to make penguins and musical instruments. They use the computer to create pictures of penguins. These are just some of the many interesting experiences in the nursery. In the reception classes, the children also experience many of the activities linked to the Chinese New Year, such as Chinese writing, making lanterns, painting and collage. They make salt dough snowmen, and use clay to make thumb pots, as in the nursery. Clay tiles with imprinted patterns extend these skills. Repeating patterns using paint and printing show variable skill and understanding. The use of the computer to support creative activities consolidates earlier learning, but there are limited opportunities for colour mixing, and observational drawing skills, for example, to be developed

further. The children enjoy singing and music making. They explore a variety of untuned percussion instruments. They have a reasonable repertoire of songs and rhymes, but more could be done to extend these skills further in the reception year. The overall satisfactory teaching results in satisfactory gains in learning by the end of the Foundation Stage.

ENGLISH

88. Standards are well below average by the time pupils are seven and below average by the age of eleven. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress. By the age of eleven, pupils for whom English is not their first language make good progress.

Strengths in the subject are:

- the provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- the way teachers manage pupils;
- the good resources available for pupils and teachers;
- pupils' good attitudes to their learning and their good behaviour.

Areas for development are:

- improving the standard of pupils' writing;
- the standard of handwriting and the presentation of work;
- the quality of marking by some teachers;
- the expectations of what pupils can achieve by some teachers;
- the use of English in other subjects.

89. Speaking and listening skills are below average for seven-year-olds but in line with what would be expected for eleven-year-olds. As many pupils enter school with a limited knowledge of language, this represents good progress. Average and lower attaining six-year-olds often do not answer in sentences, giving answers of only two or three words, and so find it difficult to explain what they want to say. Seven-year-olds listen carefully to teachers and are keen to answer but many lack confidence when speaking. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. For example, in a science lesson seven-year-old pupils predicted what would happen but were not expected to give reasons for their predictions when investigating how string telephones work. However, in some lessons opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. A class of nine-year-olds are given good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills when they read poems such as 'The tide rises, the tide falls' by H W Longfellow and 'Windy Nights' by R L Stevenson. When they compare the poems, the teacher expects them to justify the comments they make about the poems. The pupils speak clearly but they cannot always find the words they want to use. Pupils' weak command of English was seen when a ten-year-old pupil of average ability described a character in a picture of Victorian life as being 'Weller dressed than the other people.' However, higher achieving pupils respond well to the efforts that teachers make to improve their vocabulary and use words such as 'pauper', which they have heard on the television. Teachers encourage pupils to think about interesting words and higher achieving eleven-year-olds respond well, using words such as 'levitated' and 'precious'.

90. Standards in reading are below average at the end of the infants and the juniors. Pupils do not make enough progress. However, evidence from the inspection shows that the efforts the school is making to improve pupils' reading is paying off. Despite a fall in results of seven-year-olds in 2000, pupils' results are rising steadily and by the age of eleven, pupils' reading skills, although still below average, are nearing the expected level. Higher and average attaining eleven-year-olds read fluently. They pay attention to punctuation and use expressive voices to give meaning to what they read. These pupils show delight in reading

and talk about books they have at home. Their pleasure and interest in reading shows when a higher attaining pupil describes in detail a favourite book, *Elidor* by Alan Garner, and says she likes authors such as Jacqueline Wilson because of the way her writing “drags you into the story.” A lower attaining pupil, although he has few books at home, speaks of the pleasure he gets when his father reads him extracts from Shakespeare. However, pupils in other classes say they have few or no books at home. Not many pupils borrow books from the local library and reading does not appear to be a well-established pastime for many pupils.

91. By the end of Year 2, higher and average attaining pupils read with little expression but do change their voice when reading speech. They have not learnt to look ahead, reading word-by-word, and this means their reading is not fluent. Pupils attempt to say unfamiliar words by working out the sounds of letters or splitting up the words. Some pupils do not know the sounds made when letters such as ‘th’ are joined. Lower attaining pupils often guess at words, having worked out the first letter of the word and frequently do not realise that what they have read does not make sense. Sound teaching of the National Literacy Strategy means that by the age of seven, most pupils know terms such as ‘author’ and ‘illustrator’.

92. By the age of eleven, pupils find information using the contents and index pages and understand how to use the glossary. Most understand how to use the simple library classification system to find books and write down information about famous people in the Potteries. They are not helped in their task, however, because many books have not been returned to their proper place on the library shelves.

93. The school is making great efforts to improve pupils’ reading. Many pupils enter school with poor language skills and the school tries hard to overcome these problems. A new and more challenging reading scheme has been introduced. Pupils are encouraged to take home books to read and these include good quality fiction books. Teachers keep detailed records of pupils’ progress, particularly during literacy lessons. However, there is not a common approach to record keeping. In some classes, parents and other adults make comments in reading diaries but in others pupils complete their own reading records, which are simple lists of the books read. Despite the fact that many pupils do not receive enough help with their reading at home, the school does not make enough use of reading diaries as a method of communication between teachers and parents.

94. Standards in writing are well below average by the ages of seven and eleven. Pupils write in different styles in English lessons but do not do enough writing in other subjects such as religious education, geography and history. By the age of eleven, pupils write about Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. They compose arguments for and against the wearing of school uniform and write letters to the editors of newspapers and to friends. Pupils write reports about the mystery of the *Marie Celeste* and differentiate between fact and fiction in the disappearance of boats and aircraft in the ‘Bermuda Triangle’. Higher attaining pupils choose their words carefully and use short phrases to build tension in mystery stories when they write “I stumbled backwards, head whizzing round, still holding the orchid.” Average and lower attaining pupils show less imagination in their work when too many of their sentences start with ‘I’. Pupils include speech in their writing but some use too much dialogue, forgetting to use sentences to connect what is said to provide more detail. When they use speech well, pupils’ enliven their writing. For example, in a play script about an alien invasion, one character said, “Heavens to Betsy! The roof’s coming off.” Pupils separate their work into paragraphs and are introduced to a wide range of punctuation but only higher attaining pupils use it confidently.

95. Seven-year-olds write about their school holidays and compile list of words and their meanings connected with food. They use their imagination when they write about what they think it would be like to live in a palace. Pupils write instructions for making model sheep and

angels. Average and lower attaining pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Although most communicate their ideas in simple phrases and some are beginning to write in sentences, they do not do this regularly or with confidence. They use a limited range of words. Higher attaining pupils, however, write more imaginatively. Their sentences are well constructed and they use words that are more precise, such as 'wiggling' instead of 'going' and 'dreadful' instead of 'bad'. They begin to understand how repeating certain words gives a better picture of characters in a story. For example, in a story about 'David at the supermarket', the increasingly naughty behaviour of David was emphasised by repeating 'very' at each incident. Average and lower attaining pupils know about full stops and capital letters but do not use them as regularly as more able pupils, some of whom attempt to use speech marks.

96. The standard of handwriting is unsatisfactory. Pupils learn the correct letter shapes and how to join letters in handwriting lessons but do not show the same amount of care in other lessons. Letters are often not shaped correctly and the size of letters varies. In some lessons, teachers do not provide examples when they write on the board without joining their letters. By the age of eleven, higher attaining pupils can write neatly but pupils do not take sufficient care with their work, which often has untidy corrections. However, the work that pupils produce to send home for parents to see is done much more carefully.

97. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well. Those with poor language skills are given good support to help them make progress. Seven-year-olds with special educational needs need a great deal of help to make words beginning with 'st' before they can write down any words. In a lesson when ten-year-olds tried to describe a scene showing poor people in Victorian times, the support assistant worked very hard to get the pupils to think of words that described the scene and how the people might be feeling. Good attention is given to higher attaining pupils. Both nine and eleven-year-old higher attaining pupils receive teaching of the highest quality. In a lesson with eleven-year-olds, pupils were encouraged to think about using punctuation to build up complex sentences and this enables them to make their writing interesting, for example prompting one girl to write "...so if Sally was the heart of the outfit, Mac was the brains."

98. Overall, teaching is satisfactory across the school. When pupils' work was checked it could be seen that teachers need to think more carefully about how to raise standards, particularly in writing. However, during the inspection much of the teaching seen was good, with some excellent teaching when higher attaining pupils are given extra help. The two excellent lessons were characterised by a sense of urgency and the high expectation the teacher had of pupils. Pupils were given praise for the work they had done but were shown how to improve their writing further. For example, the teacher pointed out to one pupil that, by introducing speech too soon, she had not set the scene clearly enough. Pupils were encouraged to think of words that are more suitable so that they used 'exclaimed' instead of 'said' and thought of words like 'levitated'. This work was well suited to the ability of the pupils but provided them with challenges that moved their learning forward. Teaching is less successful when work is provided which does not match the needs of the pupils. Pupils made unsatisfactory progress in a lesson when high and low attaining pupils were given the same worksheet, which even the high attaining pupils found difficult to understand. Some teachers use resources well to interest pupils. Ten-year-old pupils studied a painting by a Victorian artist showing a street scene with a crowd of impoverished people. Pupils concentrated on small groups of characters and, with help managed to describe what they might be feeling. This enabled pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. In a lesson with seven-year-olds, the teacher used her artistic talents to paint pictures of the main characters in a book and this was a great help to pupils when they described the sort of people the characters were. Good speaking and listening skills were encouraged in this lesson because the teacher made the pupils give reasons for their opinions.

99. Teachers' planning is satisfactory but some teachers do not place enough importance on developing pupils' writing skills. Many pupils do not do enough writing by themselves. For example, in some lessons, teachers place too much emphasis on combining ideas from the whole class to write stories. Although this means that a well-constructed piece of writing is produced, pupils do not have the chance to plan and develop the story themselves and the amount of writing they produce depends on how much they copy down. In most lessons, good use is made of classroom assistants to support groups of pupils although sometimes they are not used efficiently before pupils begin working in groups. Teachers give clear instructions and explanations so that pupils know what they have to do. Most manage pupils well, using the school's disciplinary code when necessary. This means that pupils enjoy their lessons and most have good attitudes to the subject. Teachers use questions well to find out how much pupils have understood. However, their use of marking is inconsistent. In the best marking, teachers show pupils how they can improve their work and this helps pupils to make better progress. Too often, however, teachers congratulate pupils but do not tell them why their work is good, or they mark the work with a tick only. There are few comments that encourage pupils to produce neat and tidy work and to take pride in what they are doing. Some work is not marked at all.

100. Satisfactory use is made of ICT. Ten and eleven-year-olds use small hand-held computers to copy up their work during lessons. These and other pupils copy stories onto larger computers. They complement research carried out using books in the library by using the Internet. Some teachers miss opportunities to use computers, for example, when pupils write newspaper reports in two columns to imitate a newspaper.

101. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The subject leader has a clear view of which areas need to be improved. Efforts made to improve reading standards are proving successful and it is now planned to give greater emphasis to improving standards in writing. The headteacher and co-ordinator watch lessons to check on teaching and learning about once every four terms but this is not often enough to allow them to keep a close enough check on teaching and learning to ensure that standards will rise quickly. The school is developing sound systems for assessing pupils' work. The results of National Curriculum tests taken at the ages of seven and eleven and of similar tests taken by pupils aged eight, nine and ten are analysed to see where pupils are having difficulties. This enables teachers to predict what level they think pupils will reach by the end of the next school year. However, although this is done well by the subject leader, not all teachers have the experience to assess pupils' abilities accurately. The subject leader is building up a collection of work that enables teachers to see what standards pupils have achieved and teachers note on their planning how well lessons have gone. The information gained is not yet used consistently. It is left to individual teachers to set targets for specific pupils, which some do by writing the targets inside the cover of pupils' exercise books. The school makes good use of classroom assistants to support lessons and individual pupils. Resources are good. There is a well-stocked library and pupils have easy access to collections of books that they can take home.

102. Given that the pupils' starting point is well below average, their achievements are satisfactory. Standards are improving, albeit slowly. With this in mind, the subject has developed satisfactorily since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

103. The results of the 2001 national tests for seven-year-olds showed that standards were well below average when compared with schools nationally but below average when compared with schools that have a similar number of pupils entitled to free school meals. The current Year 2 pupils are achieving similar standards, with only a few expected to reach

the higher level of attainment (level 3). Since the last inspection, standards appear to have fallen. The tests for eleven-year-olds in 2001 showed that standards were similar to those achieved nationally but well above average when compared with similar schools. The current Year 6 pupils are achieving similar standards though not as many are achieving the higher level (level 5) as are found nationally. Nevertheless, this represents an improvement since the last inspection.

104. Most pupils in Year 2 manage to keep up with the teacher when playing a bingo game where they are required to mentally calculate answers to questions from the ten times table and cross them off on their card. However, when the lesson proceeds and they are required to add ten to a number under 100, some struggle even with the help of a grid showing numbers to 100 in lines of ten. Even more struggle to add 9 to a number despite the teacher's patient exploration of strategies for doing this, using the pupils' own suggestions. The pupils' past work shows little difference in the tasks set for the above average and those of average ability, though the outcomes are different in terms of the volume of work completed and the accuracy of the answers. The average pupils, for example, have more difficulty in working out the change from 50p in money problems and some worksheets are not completed. Below average pupils are given different work. They are competent in using numbers to 20. They test which three-dimensional shapes will roll but have difficulty in answering questions using information from a block graph. There is good coverage of the different areas of mathematics with proper emphasis on 'number'. Pupils are properly encouraged to apply their knowledge to real-life situations such as 'six ways of buying a snack, a sweet and a drink for £1'.

105. Pupils leave the reception class with below average mathematical skills and they make satisfactory progress through to Year 2. In Year 1, they concentrate on becoming familiar with numbers to 20, using them in addition and subtraction problems, some involving money. Most now know the number that comes 'before' or 'after' a given number and quickly answer the teacher in the mental maths part of the lesson. They use straws and sticks to measure length, recognise two-dimensional shapes but also find it difficult to answer questions about a graph that shows the number of pets in the class. All pupils in this year-group have similar work to complete, despite their different needs. Worksheets that the pupils complete are the common method for recording work.

106. Progress in the juniors continues to be satisfactory overall. In some year-groups progress is better, due mainly to good teaching. In some aspects of mathematics progress is better too. For example, in learning to apply their mathematical knowledge in real-life situations and in using mental calculation, progress is not as good as in work with written numbers and shapes and measures. In Year 6, some pupils struggle to keep up with the pace of a 'loop' game that requires them to work out the answer to a number problem read out by a classmate and check whether they have the answer on their card. Many Year 5 pupils use their fingers to calculate answers in their mental maths session. Work in the Year 6 books demonstrates satisfactory understanding of number and other aspects of mathematics. Above average pupils confidently work with fractions, decimals and percentages. They use positive and negative co-ordinates to plot a drawing of a kite in four quadrants and conduct a good investigation into the relationship between children's height and weight. Average pupils accurately add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers above 1000, know the properties of shapes such as a rhombus and answer questions correctly about the information conveyed by a pie-chart. They sometimes have difficulty with real-life problems, for example, in working out the amount of time that passes between one event and another. Below average pupils are often given similar work to those of average ability but they work accurately with hundreds, tens and units and understand the value of each digit. They name different types of triangle and create a block graph to represent the different flowers in

a garden. However, some struggle, for example, to identify acute, right and obtuse angles correctly.

107. All pupils are fully involved in lessons. Those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress across the school. They are often well supported by a teaching assistant. In Year 5, for example, they were helped to colour in half of a circle and two-quarters of another and see that they were equal. However, work is not always suitably matched to their needs. Work in pupils' books shows that, very often, they are given the same work as everyone else. This contrasts with most lessons seen during the inspection when different activities were organised for the various ability groups. Pupils who do not have English as their first language also receive good support and many of them make good progress through the school. In a Year 2 lesson, they are encouraged by the teacher who is supporting them to answer questions in the class discussion and then to find a strategy for adding 9 to a number. Their confidence is boosted because, with this help, they are successful.

108. All the lessons seen were satisfactory and a third were good. There was a proper emphasis on the teaching of basic skills, particularly those associated with number and teachers had a good understanding of the subject. The work in pupils' books also demonstrated satisfactory, rather than good teaching because of the lack of different work to meet the specific needs of pupils and the low expectations for the neat presentation of work and the amount that is produced in a given amount of time. In the better lessons, there was a brisk pace particularly in the mental maths sessions. In Year 4, for example, each child had a set of numbers and was required to hold up the answers to addition problems such as $30+47$ with a minimum amount of time for thinking. Every pupil was involved and the teacher was able to assess those who were having difficulty. In some mental maths sessions, teachers only required answers from those with hands up and others therefore opted out of thinking. Most teachers used resources well, particularly the overhead projector to display work and they had positive relationships with the pupils. The quality of marking varies. Comments that give guidance to pupils so that they know what to do to improve are rare but most teachers praise work when it is warranted. Year 6 pupils say that the amount of homework is just about right and it satisfactorily supports work in school.

109. The National Numeracy Strategy is now well embedded in the school and lessons are properly drawn from its recommendations and soundly planned. However the strategy allows flexibility in its delivery and not all teachers are adjusting lessons to compensate for the short concentration spans of some pupils. Introductions sometimes last too long. 'Booster' classes provide satisfactory support for pupils who find mathematics difficult. Numeracy is not being consistently developed through other subjects and through the use of ICT. There are a few examples of good practice. In a Year 2 geography topic, a pictogram illustrates different ways of travelling to school and graphs are sometimes produced after putting data into the computer but these are isolated examples.

110. The co-ordinator manages the subject competently and spends money wisely to make sure that the subject has adequate resources. All teachers have recently been observed delivering a lesson and points for development have been discussed individually. The school has correctly identified the need to improve standards in mental maths. Pupils' books are not due to be scrutinised until the autumn term this year. This is not often enough to inform the co-ordinator about on-going work and standards. Assessment systems are satisfactory and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers evaluate lessons to determine those pupils who achieve the learning that was planned and those who find work difficult. This enables the next series of lessons to be adapted if necessary. Formal tests for mathematics are administered at the end of each year starting with the national tests at the age of seven. A newly introduced computer program is enabling forecasts to be made and

progress to be checked for each pupil based on these test results. This is helpful as is the recent introduction of 'assessment files' where a week's work for each child is marked and sent home with comments and targets for improvement. These would be even more useful if work was assessed against National Curriculum levels of attainment so that progress could be monitored.

SCIENCE

111. Standards at the end of Year 2 are below average. By the end of Year 6 most pupils reach an average level for their age but fewer pupils attain the higher level 5 than nationally. Pupils achieve better than those in similar schools do. Progress through the school is good. Since the last inspection there has been a good improvement in the test results.

112. Insufficient time is allocated to science in the infant classes. Pupils enter the infant stage with little knowledge of the world around them. Many have limited language skills and find it difficult to explain what they see and do. In the lesson time available they are introduced to all elements of the science curriculum, but there is not enough time available to develop the topics to enable pupils to reach the expected level of understanding. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language receive appropriate support so they make similar progress to their class mates.

113. Pupils in the infant classes learn the names of the main body parts and explore their sense of touch through feeling and describing different textures. They listen to different sounds and begin to understand that sounds appear fainter further from their source. Pupils learn to sort objects for specific criteria such as animals with tails and those without. Most work is recorded pictorially or using worksheets. More able pupils record their findings independently, but much of the presentation is not neat enough.

114. Provision for science is good in the junior classes. Pupils have good opportunities for practical investigations. Year 4 pupils use mirrors to bend light and discover how shadows are formed. Older pupils test different materials for electrical conductivity and insulation. From their investigations pupils gain a sound understanding of the work covered. Many pupils find it difficult to explain what they have observed or make further deductions using their knowledge because of limited language skills. However, more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently or given enough opportunities to become independent learners. Not enough emphasis is placed on learning how to record their observations so pupils still rely too heavily on their teachers for the structure through using worksheets or detailed prompts from the board. The quality of presentation in books is often careless. By the end of the key stage pupils for whom English is an additional language have generally made very good progress in learning English and often achieve the higher levels. Appropriate support is given to less able pupils so they make progress in line with their ability. More able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

115. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Some very good teaching was observed. Where teachers are very clear about the learning objectives of the lesson, maintain a brisk pace and organise the lesson well, pupils concentrate and complete the tasks quickly. In a Year 4 lesson pupils were given very good opportunities to take charge of their own working when the teacher challenged them to devise their own criteria for sorting a collection of rock samples. The teacher demanded that pupils use correct vocabulary in describing the rock samples, for example 'rough' not 'lumpy'. This was further developed by introducing equipment such as scales and requiring pupils to re-sort their samples. Pupils were so interested and engrossed that their behaviour was very good and the pace of learning high. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, there is uncertainty about the specific learning objective,

the organisation is inappropriate and the pace slow so that pupils become bored and inattentive.

116. The planned curriculum covers National Curriculum requirements. However, there are too few planned opportunities to use computers in lessons. Planning does not identify the level at which topics are to be taught, nor how the tasks should be set for pupils in different ability groups. Opportunities to challenge more able pupils are not built in. There is not enough emphasis on teaching pupils how to record work scientifically or learn how to use different graphs and tables. Many teachers are not rigorous enough in demanding neat and tidy work or care of resources. Magnets had been returned to the resource box without keepers so that metal samples had all become magnetised. This is poor practice.

117. The co-ordinator manages the subject well. She has worked hard to produce the current scheme of work. What is now needed is activities for pupils in different ability groups, including more challenge for brighter pupils. Activities should also have the attainment levels identified, so teachers are more aware of how well pupils are achieving. There should be a planned programme to develop recording skills, using different graphs and using data logging and handling facilities on computers. Assessment opportunities are appropriate. Lessons are evaluated regularly and where necessary modified in future planning. Test outcomes are carefully analysed for errors and omissions and for gender differences. The information is used for future curriculum planning. Monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough.

118. There are sufficient resources to meet the planned curriculum demands. They are maintained adequately. There are appropriate books in the library, but these are not sorted within the category and are difficult to find quickly. Additional binocular microscopes would be advantageous. More time should be allocated to science in the infant classes.

ART AND DESIGN

119. The standard of work in art and design in Years 2 and 5 is average. Standards now are similar to those found at the previous inspection. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are well supported in lessons and as a result make the same progress as other pupils.

120. Pupils in Year 2 work competently with a range of media, including paint, clay, collage and printing. They show the expected awareness of colour for their age in their printing and painting. Self-portraits show increasing attention to features and detail. Work on display shows satisfactory control of paintbrushes and sound use of paint. Pupils are working at the expected level of skill, for example in their sound attempts to sew and join fabric. Pupils competently use a computer to create pictures. This term's work is mainly linked to design and technology, focusing on three-dimensional models of playground equipment, but there is less emphasis on three-dimensional work overall and skills are not as well developed in this area.

121. By Year 6, pupils have developed their skills in sewing, creating Victorian cross-stitched samplers as part of their Year 5 topic work. They have worked with satisfactory skill to create patterned clay tiles such as those in Year 4, as part of their topic on Ancient Greece. Pupils have increased their awareness of pattern. This is seen in the patterns created by various year groups using dyed rice, showing increasing skill in pattern and colour use as pupils move up the school. There is some evidence of pupils' awareness of the work of well-known artists. In Year 5, for example, pupils use crayons to re-create William Morris designs and research information about the artist as part of their work. Their Victorian

landscapes resemble styles used by Lowry. However, this aspect of art is not well developed. Similarly, skills in observational drawing are not systematically developed, with limited evidence of such work by the oldest pupils.

122. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, as was seen from the limited observation of lessons and from other information such as planning and displays of work. Most teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge and develop pupils' understanding of the use of a wide variety of materials. However, in Years 3 to 6, work tends to focus on the use of art and design in relation to work in other subjects, with few opportunities for older pupils to engage in artistic experiences and develop artistic skills for their own sake. Sketchbooks are used in some year groups, but their use as a tool to support the development of skills is limited, with little purposeful marking and few comments to help pupils improve their skills. Computers are used satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2, but their use is less established in supporting pupils' learning in Years 3 to 6. Most pupils enjoy artwork and respond with interest in lessons.

123. The co-ordinator has recently been appointed to the role. She has good expertise and an enthusiasm for art, making her suitably qualified to lead the subject. There has been no focus in recent years on checking the teaching of art and design. This has been identified as an area for development. The co-ordinator has begun to put together a portfolio of work, but this is at a very early stage and would benefit from comments about the National Curriculum levels of attainment. The school makes good use of the local environment such as the canals and pottery industry to enhance learning in the subject. The contribution of art and design to pupils' cultural development is good. Good use is made of artists-in-residence such as the visit from a Hindu artist, developing work in Rangoli and dyed rice patterns. Good displays such as those on Chinese New Year and India highlight many aspects of art within these cultures, with examples of wax resist patterns on Indian embroidery and patterns based on Islamic designs. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are at an early stage of development. At present, this does not enable teachers to ensure the consistent development of skills, particularly for older pupils and those who are potentially higher attainers, to ensure they are sufficiently challenged. The art club makes a positive contribution to the subject and is enjoyed by a number of pupils in Years 3 to 6.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

124. The school has maintained the satisfactory provision for design and technology as presented in the 1997 inspection report. Standards are average at the end of both Years 2 and 6 and pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of skills and knowledge across all aspects of the subject.

125. Infant pupils make simple designs in advance of making their models. Year 1/2 pupils have studied the local park and made plans of their ideal playground space. They have examined ways to make structures stable and then used this knowledge when designing playground apparatus. The models made after the process of plan and design incorporate pupils' ideas of stable construction and show the expected level of jointing and strengthening.

126. In junior classes, pupils build satisfactorily on the skills developed in the infant years. By the age of eleven, they have gone beyond the plan-design-make stage into the evaluation of the final product and the suggestion of ways to improve it. Year 6 pupils have taken part in a technology day held at the neighbouring secondary school. They have completed a number of design and technology challenges including the design, construction and testing of bridges required to carry light, medium and heavy loads and the manufacture of vehicles to withstand a crash test. In this work, pupils achieve average levels of skill, knowledge and understanding.

127. The teaching of design and technology is satisfactory. Whilst few design and technology lessons were observed, samples of pupils' previous work show that the subject is taught regularly throughout the school. It is also evident that teachers have good subject knowledge and create some good opportunities for pupils to build skills and knowledge. Planning is not always focused enough on the needs of pupils of different attainment levels and the sharing and review and evaluation of objectives for learning with the pupils is inconsistent. Pupils' response to design and technology is good and they make satisfactory gains in skills and knowledge. Pupils concentrate soundly, produce satisfactory amount of work and develop satisfactory levels of independence in their work.

128. The subject is managed soundly by the coordinator. She has good commitment to improvement and has firm and sensible ideas for future development of design and technology, including the provision of a consistent system of assessment that is focused on the building of skills. Whilst the coordinator has formed good links with other members of staff to support them in their work, she has had no opportunities to monitor standards, progress, teaching and the curriculum in other classes. There is every reason to believe that the school can build successfully on the strengths in design and technology and that standards will continue to rise.

GEOGRAPHY

129. Standards are below average at the end of each key stage. Infant pupils have experience of mapwork skills when walking round the school and its immediate locality. They mark familiar landmarks on a prepared trail plan and plot routes on a large scale plan and begin to recognise human and physical features around school. They produce a block graph of methods of transport to school. Pupils are introduced to symbols by recognising objects related to specific jobs, for example the 'lollipop' and the crossing warden and computer and the school secretary. However, infant pupils have difficulties talking about this work and recording it in meaningful ways.

130. Junior pupils extend their mapping skills by using more detailed plans and maps. By the end of the key stage pupils locate major land masses, but their knowledge is limited and insecure. In mapwork Year 6 pupils are reasonably confident using two figure co-ordinates to locate features on a large scale local map. Less able pupils find this difficult. Pupils in Year 4 study an Indian village community for comparison with their own community. Year 6 pupils study contrasting life and landscape in Pakistan. These are good choices using pupils' own experiences. The quality of pupils' written work is unsatisfactory as it is too brief to show their geographical knowledge in detail.

131. Few lessons were observed during the inspection. In those lessons seen teaching was satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers prepared the lessons well with specific learning objectives. Work was soundly matched to pupils' different ability levels. The pace was good and pupils' behaviour positively managed. Good learning was achieved through using maps and atlases to locate specific places and regions. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. There is insufficient challenge for more able pupils to extend their knowledge. Pupils for whom English is an additional language have usually acquired good English by the end of Year 6 and achieve at least as well as other pupils.

132. The planned curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements. Topics are linked well to history. Good use is made of the local area and other visits to support learning and understanding. Links with literacy and numeracy teaching are not strong enough and not enough use is made of computers. Activities should also have the attainment levels identified,

so teachers are more aware of how well pupils are achieving. Assessment opportunities are appropriate.

133. The co-ordinator does not have enough time to regularly monitor teaching and standards achieved by pupils. There are good resources to support teachers and sufficient atlases and maps. There are sufficient reference books in the school library but they are not sorted within the category and are difficult to find quickly.

HISTORY

134. Standards of work seen are below average at the end of each key stage. Infant pupils learn about toys from the past when they visit the local museum. They compare these with their own toys. More able pupils record these differences independently. They have limited understanding of chronology. Restricted language skills make it difficult for most pupils to use appropriate reference books or write and talk about the past. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language have enough support for them to make satisfactory progress.

135. At the end of Year 6 pupils have a better knowledge and understanding than their work indicates. They describe features of past societies and periods. They compare differences between past and present situations and explain some of the reasons for these. Pupils in Year 5 know how the coming of railways and development of industry affected the growth of towns in Victorian times. They give sensible explanations for differences between their own and Victorian children's lives when visiting the local museum. Year 4 pupils use learning from previous lessons to make deductions when handling artefacts from Ancient Greece.

136. Many pupils have limited language and reference skills. The quality of written work is disappointing and below that expected for their age. All but the most able older pupils have difficulty in distilling specific information from reference books and the Internet. Expectations are not high enough, so most answers are very superficial. Written work is often careless and illustrations immature. Pupils with special educational needs have support so they make satisfactory progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress in learning English and make at least satisfactory progress and often good progress.

137. Teaching is variable with some very good teaching seen. Occasionally teaching is unsatisfactory. A particularly good lesson was seen in Year 4. The teacher had used imaginary characters familiar to the pupils to introduce archaeology. This was followed by a prepared sand box in which he had buried various artefacts. Pupils carefully dug in the sand using a small trowel and cleaned the objects found with a brush. This activity generated great interest. Pupils were excited by their discoveries and quickly used their knowledge of Greek myths and legends to describe the objects and relate them to life in the period. The teacher then entrusted pupils with a number of fragile objects to describe in detail. This was cleverly focused so that less able pupils could achieve as well as the most able. Orally pupils were quite competent in describing their object, but many found it difficult to write down the description at the expected standard for their age.

138. Where learning is less successful it is because the teacher has not planned and prepared carefully enough so that pupils have difficulty in completing the task set. Expectations are not always high enough and the pace of learning too slow, so that progress is limited.

139. The planned curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements. Topics are linked well to other subjects, particularly geography. There are good opportunities for using

computers to research information built into the programme of work. Activities should also have the attainment levels identified, so teachers are more aware of how well pupils are achieving. Assessment opportunities are appropriate. What is needed now is greater emphasis on opportunities for writing in different styles and higher expectations for the written work and research activities.

140. The co-ordinator does not have enough time to regularly monitor teaching and standards achieved by pupils. There are good resources to support teachers and for hands on experience for pupils. Good use is made of the local area, visitors to the school and visits to local places of interest to support learning. There are sufficient reference books in the school library but they are not sorted within the category and are difficult to find quickly.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

141. The 1997 inspection report judged that standards, progress and provision in information technology were all unsatisfactory. Very little teaching of the subject took place at that time and the level of resourcing was not up to that found in most other primary schools. The second key issue in that report related to the raising of standards in information technology.

142. The school has worked well to make improvements in the subject. The computer suite, although small, is well equipped, the curriculum has been improved significantly and teachers' subject knowledge and expertise has been developed successfully. Today, pupils have a sound grounding in the different aspects of information and communication technology (ICT) and standards are average at the ages of seven and eleven. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of basic skills in ICT and there is some evidence of standards that are above average in the work of older juniors.

143. Pupils in infant classes learn how to open software packages, load files and enter, save and print the data. They also master the techniques of accessing information stored on CD-ROM. In a Year 1/2 lesson observed, the pupils achieved average standards as they used drop-down menus and search and index radio buttons to make selections. They quickly grew used to the new technical terms being used and enjoyed the animation of the opening scenes. The manipulation of the mouse was not always as steady as it is for some pupils of this age. A major jump in knowledge and understanding took place when the pupils talked about the differences between researching animals on CD-ROM and through the use of books. The pupils agreed that the animation added a useful dimension to the computer based work because it made their task more interesting. One pupil pointed out that both the screen and the book had attractive pictures of animals.

144. This platform of knowledge, skill and understanding is developed soundly in junior classes. In Year 3, pupils use the computer to compose simple, repeating musical phrases. In this work, the advantages of using computers were also well established. The pupils responded well to the instant playback and visual representation of their compositions because it was almost instantaneous. They worked hard to sequence the elements of their compositions in symmetrical patterns such as A-B-A-B or AA-BB-CC-AA-BB. The lower attaining pupils could not manage this as successfully and tended to compose a tune in A-B-E-C-D or similar random sequence. Nonetheless, the development of musical understanding in this lesson was good and demonstrates some effective use of computers to support learning in other subjects.

145. There is also some good use made of computers to develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy. In a good Year 4 lesson, pupils used the word processor to elaborate their writing for different audiences as they worked well to compile a book for reception aged

children. The pupils confidently highlighted text in order to edit or format it, though this was sometimes done arbitrarily, so the resulting text was a mix of font styles and sizes without reference to its purpose. The teacher encouraged the pupils to think carefully of the result they wanted to achieve and suggested other useful techniques to create attractive, easily readable text that would capture the interest of the target audience. Skills were built well and standards were average by the end of the lesson.

146. Behaviour is generally appropriate in lessons, though a small number of boys occasionally lose interest and show silly behaviour. In the main, teachers deal with this well. In other respects, most pupils concentrate well, work hard and produce satisfactory amounts of work.

147. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In some lessons, the pace could be quicker and the explanation of some technical terms more detailed. In one lesson for example, the teacher used many technical terms without definition and operated the computer too quickly for all pupils to follow effectively the sequence of instructions to load the software. Otherwise, subject knowledge is satisfactory, expectations are sound and the management of pupils is good. Planning could have sharper focus on the exact skills and knowledge to be learned in lessons by each attainment group and there could be more opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own learning towards the end of the session.

148. The coordinator for ICT has worked hard to improve the subject and has been successful. The Education Action Zone has had good impact on provision in ICT through the focused support that it has provided in terms of staff training, improved resourcing and curriculum development. Strong links with Port Vale Football Club have also brought benefits to pupils as they learn ICT. Access to Port Vale computing facilities is regular and has provided opportunities for learning that the school could otherwise not provide. There are still things to complete in order to finalise the school's plans for ICT, including greater direct monitoring of lessons, the development of a consistent system of skills assessment and the setting and sharing of targets for learning for different groups of pupils. However, improvement has been good over the last five years and the prospects for continuing improvement are promising.

MUSIC

149. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is average, but where the specialist teacher is involved attainment is sometimes good, particularly in the junior classes when developing skills in composition and the use of tuned percussion. All pupils make steady progress as they move through the school, but progress in lessons with the specialist teacher is good because skills are systemically developed and much is covered in lessons as a result of the brisk pace and good teaching. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are progressing at the same rate as other pupils.

150. Pupils in Year 6 sing in harmony and with good timing. This was evident as they sang a simple two-part song, to accompany the carousel music on a tape. In composing and performing pupils use a range of tuned and untuned instruments, demonstrating an appropriate sense of timing and level of skill. They are familiar with a range of notes from their work with the music specialist who set a task for homework to compose a simple tune using the notes G, A and B. The work of the specialist music teacher is consolidated in lessons with the class teacher, but limited music skills and lack of sufficient time prevent the learning moving forward. Pupils throughout the school sing tunefully and competently, but these skills are not built upon effectively in assemblies and during singing practices.

151. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but is good when taken by the specialist teacher. In a good Year 2 lesson pupils listened well to weather sounds and responded well to the teacher's questions. The teacher was clear about what she wanted the pupils to learn. Her expectations of the standards that all pupils were capable of achieving and of their level of involvement and effort were high. The brisk pace and systematic development of skills ensured good coverage of work in this lesson. Singing improved as pupils practised until they sang and used the instruments with the expected level of competence. Pupils clearly enjoyed this lesson, paying good attention and responding with a good level of interest. They make good progress in the skills of listening and appraising and in their singing and percussion skills. These lessons are well supported by the class teacher, who ensures all pupils participate and behave well, enabling the specialist teacher to focus well on teaching and learning. This also provides effective staff development. Progress in a Year 6 lesson was satisfactory, but less effective due to limited time for the lesson, limited knowledge of the teacher and a lack of careful preparation.

152. The specialist teacher is gradually adapting the national guidance for music in the school along with the existing commercial scheme of work. This is currently being refined. She endeavours to link this with current topic work. She is able to monitor skill progression through her own lessons, but at present the monitoring of class teachers' music is underdeveloped as are the assessment procedures and their use to inform teachers' planning. Learning opportunities in lessons are enhanced by a good range of activities such as visits from musicians and performers, participation in local music events such as the Education Action Zone concert and a recorder group. In addition, a small number of pupils receive additional tuition in brass instruments from visiting specialists. There is a good focus on other cultures in music, with work linked to India, Chinese New Year, the Caribbean and Africa. Visiting artists have included Indian musicians and a Jamaican storyteller and drummer. Overall resources for music are good and support learning well. At present there is insufficient use of computers and other new technology to support pupils' learning in music, although this is currently identified as a target for development. Music makes a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development, but there are missed opportunities to enhance spiritual development and reflection in assemblies and collective worship.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

153. Although no lessons were seen involving eleven-year-olds, the attainment of ten-year-olds is typical for their age and it is likely that this will also be the case for older pupils. The standards achieved by seven-year-olds have improved since the previous inspection and are now average.

154. By the age of seven, pupils learn the value of warming up before lessons. They make wide shapes with their arms and legs while standing still, then curl into small shapes. Pupils are agile and move confidently around the room making similar shapes and two pupils showed good imagination when they combined to make shapes together. When pupils go on to make shapes on benches, some pupils move in an imaginative way, for example rotating as they jump from side to side along the bench. They show good control of their bodies. Ten-year-olds show satisfactory control of their bodies when they work in small groups to practise movements leading to a dance sequence about 'Smugglers'. They demonstrate sly movements, turning their backs on other pupils when they show how they think a smuggler would try to hide an object he had stolen.

155. Pupils watch each other's performances and make suggestions about improving what they do. For example, they work out that they must not stand too close together and that they need to make their arm movements larger so that they can be more easily seen. Several boys are self-conscious about taking part in dance lessons and the teacher has to work hard

to keep their interest but they do eventually contribute to the group work. A high degree of interest and participation by all the same pupils was seen in a lesson taken by three coaches from Port Vale Football Club. Seemingly simple exercises where they had to step in and out of a ladder laid on the ground challenged pupils. The coaches increased pupils' determination to do well when they said that these were the sort of exercises that footballers as famous as David Beckham performed every day. Nonetheless, many pupils found it difficult to complete the sequences without making mistakes as the sequences became more complex. In the eagerness to show what they could do many pupils tried to go too fast and lost concentration. It came as a surprise to some, particularly the boys, that girls proved the more agile and careful. Despite this, all pupils improved their performance by the end of the lesson.

156. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory and some teaching is very good. There was one unsatisfactory lesson. Good use is made of coaches from Port Vale Football Club, who teach skills based on football training to all junior classes during the year. The very good teaching in these lessons is characterised by the high expectations of the coaches, the challenging exercises that catch the imagination of all pupils and, above all, the fun that pupils get from the lessons. Pupils behave well because they are so involved they have little time to do otherwise. They are taught to use the time when they are waiting for their turn at exercises by watching what others are doing and trying to see why some pupils are more successful than others. The coaches boost the confidence of pupils when they ask some to demonstrate to others.

157. Good teaching also took place when, in a drama lesson, pupils were asked to look at groups working and make suggestions for improving the performance. Pupils do not make as much progress as they might when teachers allow pupils to show what they have done but do not say why the performance was good. The importance of teamwork is stressed in both football coaching and drama. However, the needs of individual pupils are taken into account. For instance, all three coaches worked patiently with one pupil who found the exercises difficult so that he successfully completed an exercise. This led to the rest of the class spontaneously applauding his efforts. Teaching is unsatisfactory when teachers do not assess what pupils are doing and work out ways of improving their performance. The pace of the lesson is slow because pupils are given too much time to get changed and this lack of urgency continues into the lesson. Further time is lost when the teacher does not know how to set up the equipment. Teachers do not pay enough attention to reinforcing safe ways of using equipment. They do not emphasise the correct way to lift benches and some do not establish rules for using the equipment. Equipment is sometimes placed too near walls and obstructions. When teachers do not know how to set up equipment, they cannot be sure that it has been safely erected.

158. The management of the subject is satisfactory. Planning is sound and covers all the recommended areas. The subject leader is looking at alternative schemes of work to improve what is provided for pupils aged eight to eleven. Teachers evaluate what they have done after each lesson and after each set of lessons. Pupils in the junior classes go swimming and about 95 per cent of pupils can swim 25 metres by the time they leave school. The school makes very good use of links with Port Vale Football Club and links with another school to arrange an annual visit to the Old Trafford football ground. There are good resources for physical education, with sufficient equipment for all areas of the curriculum and a large hall. The school subscribes to the Top Sport scheme and teachers have been trained to use the equipment and lesson notes provided by the scheme. Pupils compete successfully against other schools, winning the boys' section of the small schools athletics competition and reaching the final of a six-a-side tournament. Pupils also take part in rounders matches. All pupils are given the opportunity to take part in sports activities. Although there is no netball team at present, both girls and boys play in the school football team.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

159. At the time of the last inspection, standards were judged to be in line with the requirements of the agreed programme of work for Staffordshire. These standards have been maintained for the seven-year-old pupils but, because of difficulties in remembering what has been taught, the eleven-year-olds are not now achieving similar standards. These judgements are based on observations of two lessons in the juniors, discussions with groups of pupils and a scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning.

160. Pupils in Year 2 know the purpose of prayers and have written their own, giving thanks for harvest gifts. They understand that religions influence how their followers live – stressing care and love for others, for example. They have a satisfactory understanding of Jesus' birth and know that Christmas is a celebration of that event. They talk knowledgeably about stories from Jesus' life, for example, how he cured blind Bartimaeus and welcomed children when others tried to push them away. They explain the significance of festivals in faiths other than Christianity such as Hanukkah for Jews and Eid for Muslims. They talk enthusiastically about the display in the entrance hall celebrating Chinese New Year and recall how they learnt about that festival when they were younger.

161. Year 6 pupils cannot demonstrate their knowledge and understanding as confidently. In the first of a series of lessons about Jesus' character, the teacher is hindered in her attempts to move the lesson at a brisk pace because of pupils' uncertainty about the basic events in Jesus' life. Some think that He died on Easter Sunday rather than on Good Friday. They have sketchy knowledge of parables and miracles. In conversation, they have to be prompted to recall features of Judaism and Islam, though a recent visit to a mosque has made a significant impression and they are knowledgeable about the traditions and rituals associated with Muslim worship. They know that Jews worship in a synagogue and that Moses is an important figure for them but are uncertain about the similarities and differences between Judaism and other faiths. "We get mixed up with the names and the religions" they say but they recognise that it is important to know about the beliefs of others, "so that you can understand them".

162. Work is properly drawn from the Staffordshire programme of work and adapted for the particular needs of the school. The work in pupils' books shows that topics are satisfactorily taught. Many lessons in the infants are oral and little is recorded in written or pictorial form. Nevertheless, these pupils make satisfactory progress, including those with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English. In the juniors, the presentation of work is not usually of a high standard and there is little variety in the methods chosen to record work. Usually it is in the form of a written account with little evidence that the teachers are expressing high expectations for accuracy in order to promote literacy skills. Occasionally there is some variety. In Year 4, for example, when studying Moses, a poster is drawn with the message 'Set my People Free'. With more variety in the ways of recording work, pupils' interest would be enhanced, helping them to recall their work more readily. At present, because pupils do not retain their knowledge, progress is unsatisfactory for the majority including those with special educational needs and those who do not use English as their first language.

163. Taking into account the lessons and the work seen, teaching is satisfactory. In the better lesson, the teacher demonstrated good knowledge of the subject and valued every contribution that the pupils made including those with special educational needs who were fully included and contributed ideas along with everyone else. The result was a good discussion about Jesus' temptations in the desert and of how Christians remember this event during Lent. Pupils were therefore keen to complete a worksheet about what people

might give up and they understood the idea of fasting. Older pupils also showed positive attitudes in their lesson but found it difficult to conduct research into events in Jesus' life using the Bible because they lacked the necessary literacy skills. Many needed help to locate the particular book within the Bible that would give them the information and then they copied out complete passages rather than using their own words to tell the story.

164. The co-ordinator manages the subject competently. Resources are adequate and neatly stored in boxes ready for lessons about the different faiths. All teachers have been observed conducting lessons within the last year but pupils' work is not continuously scrutinised and the co-ordinator is not entirely aware of the standards being achieved. She is aware, however, that ICT is not supporting work in RE. Similarly there is no school system for assessing the standards and progress of individual pupils.