

INSPECTION REPORT

BIRCHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Yeovil

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123730

Headteacher: Mr R Culham

Reporting inspector: Mr M S Burghart
20865

Dates of inspection: 18th – 21st February 2002

Inspection number:243043

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Birchfield Road
Yeovil
Somerset

Postcode: BA21 5RL

Telephone number: 01935 437609

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr J Lester

Date of previous inspection: May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20865	Mr M Burghart Registered inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language; Information and communication technology; Physical education.	How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9644	Mr M Whitaker Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20977	Mr R Thelwell Team inspector	English; Art.	The school's results and pupils' achievements.
29362	Mr D Cousins Team inspector	Equal opportunities; Mathematics; Geography; History.	
22578	Mr G Jones Team inspector	Science; Design and technology.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27899	Mrs G Beasley Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage; Music; Religious education.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Birchfield is a large primary school in Yeovil in Somerset. The school provides variable accommodation (half of which is in old temporary classrooms) for fourteen classes, two for each year group. There are 409 children on the school roll aged four to eleven. There is an average of 29 pupils per class which is about average. Pupils are drawn from the local surrounding area a few from private, but most from rented accommodation. Most of the pupils attend some kind of pre school group before starting Year R. Their attainment on entry to the school, aged four, varies, but overall is below average. The headteacher has been in post since January 2001. He is supported by fourteen full time, and two part time, teachers. Since the last inspection half the staff have changed. Six teachers have joined the school in the last two years. Before the head's appointment a seconded headteacher managed the school for one term. There are 140 pupils on the special educational needs register. This accounts for 34 per cent of the school roll, and is well above the national average. No pupils have formal statements under the terms of the DfES Code of Practice¹, which proportionally is below average. Eighty-two children are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is about the national average of 20 per cent. No pupils require extra support as a consequence of having English as an additional language. This is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Birchfield Primary is a school which, having been through an unsettled period since the last inspection, where standards fell to well below expectations, is now improving. Pupils and staff get on very well together. Pupils respond positively for the clear majority of the time. The overall quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good, with some very good and occasionally excellent features; although some aspects still need improving. The school is well led and there is a shared commitment to raising standards. Currently pupils' attainment is broadly in line with averages and expectations when pupils are aged seven, but below average and expectations at age eleven in English, mathematics, music and religious education. Provision for the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs is very good and as a result many of these pupils achieve nationally expected levels. Some higher attaining pupils do not yet reach levels of which they are capable. In a variety of subjects such pupils have been underachieving. The school's expenditure per pupil is above average, but this matches its income and currently the school represents reasonable value for money.

What the school does well

- Half of observed teaching was good or better, with particular strengths in Year 6.
- Provision for special educational needs is very good.
- The school successfully encourages pupils' positive attitudes and manages behaviour well.
- Relationships are very good.
- Provision for pupils' social development is very good, and moral development is good.
- The school takes good care of pupils.
- It is well led.
- Links with other schools are very good.

What could be improved

¹ Code of Practice: This gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1993 Education Act.

- Standards for eleven year olds compared with all and similar schools.
- Levels of challenge for potentially higher attaining pupils.
- The management of some subjects.
- Some aspects of the quality of teaching.
- Making even greater use of assessment to set targets and improve the curriculum.
- Resources for mathematics, geography, and outdoor equipment for those in the Foundation Stage².
- The quality of accommodation.
- Attendance rates.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in May 1997 the school has experienced considerable changes in staffing including the headteacher. Most of the initiatives to bring about improvements are very recent. Although the last report found the school to be 'very good' the interim period between inspections has seen a decline in standards of work and behaviour, which are now being addressed. As a formal judgement the school has made insufficient progress over the five years since the last inspection. However, progress in the past year has been rapid and is successfully improving the situation. Behaviour is now effectively managed and standards are good. Planning for subjects is being developed and National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy have been introduced. As a result standards are now satisfactory in numeracy, and in all but the writing element of English. Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have been substantially improved and are now good in the designated suite. Assessment procedures have been established in English, mathematics and science as required by the last inspection. More still needs to be done to improve the use of data to raise standards further and to extend assessment to other subjects. Communications with parents are now considered good and still improving, but there is more to do to improve the quality of reports. Overall the school is suitably placed for future development.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores³ in National Curriculum tests.

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

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
Average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

The school's performance in 2001 was in the bottom 5 per cent of similar schools (those with between 8 and 20 per cent free school meals) for English and mathematics and only a little better in science. Although the proportion of special educational needs in the school is high and pupils' attainment on entry is below average, this still gives cause for concern. Comparisons are based on average point scores which take into account a weighting

² The Foundation Stage refers to children from entry up to and including age six when they complete the reception year.

³ Average points scores refers to the average of pupils' scores weighted by Ofsted for each level attained in each subject.

devised by Ofsted to give added credit for pupils reaching higher levels. Whilst the proportion of lower attainers reaching, or nearly reaching the expected level is a success of the school, low numbers of pupils at higher than average levels is the reason for the poor grades recorded above. The school's trend has been downward over a four year period culminating in last year's very low results. However the year group tested in 2001 had 55 per cent of pupils receiving extra help as a consequence of having special needs and was not typical. Nevertheless detailed scrutiny of results does indicate some improvements from 2000. Current Year 6 pupils show improvement with the majority of subjects meeting national expectations. However, inspection evidence shows that standards in English, mathematics, history, music and religious education are still likely to be below expectations when pupils leave the school. Results of tests for seven year olds are more encouraging with most pupils (and indeed in mathematics all pupils) achieving the expected level for their age. The school has done well to raise standards at this age. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress from a below average start and most will meet the expected Early Learning Goals⁴ for physical, personal, social, emotional and creative development before they move into Year 1. Their attainment in communication, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world is below average at age six.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: pupils usually show interest and try hard. Most enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: notwithstanding those who can, and sometimes do, present problems; much improved.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory overall with strengths in the very good quality of relationships.
Attendance	Very low in comparison with the national average, with above average levels of unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory with good features	Satisfactory with good features	Satisfactory with good features and some weaknesses

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.

During the inspection half of the observed teaching was at least good or better. Work scrutiny and analysis of past test results suggests it has not always been this good. Teaching is being systematically improved as a result of good monitoring by the head, good use of performance management and good opportunities for professional development. All but five lessons observed were satisfactory or better. One in six lessons were very good and two of these

⁴ QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) has produced a set of 'Early Learning Goals' for children in this stage of education. These outcomes are a set of skills, knowledge and understanding that children might be expected to achieve by the age of six. There are six areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development and creative development.

(one special needs teaching session and one Year 6 history lesson) were excellent. Thirteen teachers had at least one good lesson and seven had very good sessions. Four different teachers accounted for the five less than satisfactory lessons. Teaching of special educational needs, which includes the contribution of learning support assistants, is consistently good and often better. Foundation Stage teaching was at least satisfactory and good in over a third of lessons. Almost three-quarters of Year 6 teaching was good or better. Literacy is usually well taught because it is well planned and pupils learn well. Numeracy teaching is satisfactory overall and reflects strengths and weaknesses in teachers' understanding. One mathematics lesson in Year 3 was judged unsatisfactory, as was a Year 5 science session. ICT teaching is good with staff making very good use of new equipment to promote learning. Strengths in teaching are in relationships, pupils' management, where planning is good, and good questioning. Weaknesses which sometimes affect even lessons judged satisfactory or better are in a lack of pace and time not used well, some gaps in teachers' knowledge of how to teach subjects (notably in physical education, music and religious education), marking which does not show how pupils can improve, and insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall; with strengths in provision for literacy and in teaching ICT as a subject. Satisfactory use of homework and good extracurricular activities. Some aspects of some subjects are underemphasised and some schemes of work are in need of updating. Foundation Stage curriculum sound, but a lack of out door resources has negative effects. No formal scheme for personal, social and health education, but developments are in hand.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good planning, assessment and support. Very good co-ordination and consistently good support from learning assistants.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall: spiritual satisfactory, moral good and very good social development opportunities for pupils to work and play together. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory with the exception of sufficient opportunities to raise pupils' awareness of multicultural issues.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good physical care. Assessment is effective in English and is being developed in mathematics and science. More to do in other subjects to identify how well pupils are doing.

Communications with parents have been improved since the last inspection and are now judged good. Most parents support the school in ensuring homework is done and through the active parent and friends association which raises much money on the school's behalf.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
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Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is well led by the headteacher who sets the educational direction of the school. Senior managers make a good contribution. The staff are committed and are all involved in managing aspects and subjects with varying degrees of success. More to do to clarify responsibilities and develop understanding of management processes.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors give good support, especially with buildings and site issues, and in special educational needs. All statutory obligations met, but some acts of collective worship do not fulfil requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good analysis by head and deputy, but not all subjects have procedures in place to collect information and draw conclusions.
The strategic use of resources	Good use of finance. Improved procedures. Staffing, accommodation and resources used satisfactorily. Best value principles appropriately considered. Some gaps in resources. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in terms of quality and quantity.

Much improved procedures regarding financial management have addressed the many issues raised by the local education authority auditor soon after this headteacher was appointed. The school gives reasonable value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is approachable. • The school is well led. • Teaching is good. • Expectations are high. • Most children like school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards of behaviour. • Homework. • Information about pupils' progress. • Extracurricular provision. • How the school works with parents.

Ninety-one parents returned the Ofsted questionnaire and 19 parents attended a meeting with the registered inspector. A further five parents met with the lay inspector during the inspection. The majority of comments were positive about the school and inspectors are pleased to agree with most of these. The slight exception being that although expectations are high for special educational needs pupils with very good outcomes, they could be higher for more able pupils. With regard to behaviour the current situation is good and a credit to good management. Homework is judged as satisfactory and provision for extracurricular activities is good. The school's relationship with parents is considered much improved and is now good, but there is more to do to give sufficient information in annual reports to parents about what pupils are achieving.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Assessment of children on entry to reception confirms three-quarters have skills and understanding in communication, language and literacy well below those expected for their age. With the exception of physical development, where attainment matches that of similarly aged children, performance is below expected levels in all other areas of learning. The school makes sound provision for its young children, enabling them to make good progress in personal, social and emotional development, and in communication, language and literacy. Children make satisfactory progress in the remaining areas of learning. By the time they leave reception, nearly all achieve the officially recommended learning goals in personal, social and emotional development, physical development, and in creative development. The majority do not reach the expected levels in communication, language and literacy, in mathematical development, or in knowledge and understanding of the world. As a consequence, most children enter Year 1 of the National Curriculum programmes of study with levels of attainment in speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics below, and in some cases, well below those expected for their age.

2. End of Year 2 National Curriculum assessments for 2001 showed overall standards in reading to match the average of all schools nationally, and those of similar schools. Although overall standards in writing and mathematics were similar to the national average, performance was below that of similar schools, based on eligibility for free school meals. However, when taking into account pupils' below average attainment on entry to Year 1, this represents good learning. Further analysis of results showed the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in reading, writing and teacher assessment of science, to be at least above average. In mathematics, all pupils gained the expected level; this being consistent with the top five per cent of schools nationally for this comparison. Results were creditable when considering 30 per cent of pupils assessed were on the school's register of special educational needs. However, the proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels were at least below the national average. The exception being in writing where it was average. In order to raise standards, the school focused on strategies relating to problem solving in mathematics, the quality of writing, and handwriting.

3. Overall results of end of Year 6 National Curriculum assessments in English, mathematics and science have fallen dramatically since 1997. In 2001, results of all assessed subjects for pupils aged eleven were very low, being consistent with the bottom five per cent nationally. Results in English and mathematics were equally low when compared with similar schools. They were well below in science. However, it should be noted that 55 per cent of pupils assessed had special educational needs. In addition to the high proportion of pupils with such needs, other factors contributing towards the decline in standards included:

- A high turnover of staff in Years 3 to 6;
- Insufficient use of information gained from data analysis to review curriculum planning and set targets to raise standards.

4. Analysis of results of 2001 assessments in English led to a good range of strategies to improve standards in writing, punctuation and handwriting. Evaluation of mathematics results led to a focus on teaching 'shape, space and measure', investigative activities, together with work relating to decimals, fractions and percentages. For both subjects, the school provided in-service training and a closely monitored use of nationally funded additional support for teaching literacy and numeracy. These strategies, together with a lower proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 6 are having positive impacts on standards.

5. For pupils currently in Year 2, where over a third of pupils have special educational needs, inspection evidence shows attainment in English, mathematics and science to be in line with national expectations. Attainment at Year 6, where nearly a third of pupils are on the

school's register of special needs, is average for mathematics and science. However, overall attainment in English is below average.

6. By the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils' speaking and listening skills meet national expectations. This represents good progress across Years 1 and 2, and satisfactory development between Years 3 and 6. By age seven, pupils talk sensibly about their work. They show growing confidence in asking and answering questions, and are keen to read and speak aloud. By age eleven, pupils listen attentively, make thoughtful contributions to discussions, and use a range of vocabulary in an appropriate manner.

7. In reading, pupils learn well and standards are average. By the end of Year 2, pupils read confidently and clearly, observing punctuation. By Year 6, most are fluent readers. They read a wide range of texts with accuracy. Higher attaining readers discuss character and plot, and talk about authors and favourite books confidently, giving considered reasons for their preferences.

8. By the end of Year 2, standards in writing are average. Pupils write logical, sequenced sentences with a satisfactory range of punctuation. Although the majority of pupils at Year 6 reach the levels expected nationally for their age, the proportion doing so is not enough to meet requirements. As a consequence, attainment is below average. From Years 3 to 6, pupils write for a range of purposes, and draft and edit their work. Most acquire sound strategies for correct spelling and make satisfactory use of dictionaries to support writing. Pupils make appropriate use of their developing writing skills when producing work for other subjects, including history and science. At the end of Years 2 and 6, standards in handwriting are satisfactory. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6, nearly all pupils write in a fluent and clear cursive style.

9. In mathematics, standards are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This reflects good learning in Years 1 and 2, and sound learning between Years 3 and 6. Mental arithmetic is developed well through regular 'mental agility' activities that take place as part of each day's mathematics lesson. Numeracy skills are used appropriately to support pupils' learning in other subjects, including science and information and communication technology (ICT).

10. At the end of Years 2 and 6, standards in science are average. Across the school, a strong emphasis is given to investigative science. Pupils have a broad knowledge of science, and they observe, experiment, and use the skills of scientific enquiry. They have a clear understanding of what makes a test 'fair'.

11. In ICT, pupils learn well and gain nationally expected levels by the ages of seven and eleven. In religious education, satisfactory progress results in attainment at the end of Year 2 meeting the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. However, by age eleven, pupils' understanding of faiths other than Christianity is unsatisfactory. As a consequence, standards are below expectation. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, attainment meets expectations in art and design, geography, history and physical education. Whilst insufficient evidence was available to make a judgement on attainment in design and technology at the end of Year 2, standards meet required levels at Year 6. Although attainment in music meets expectations at Year 2, unsatisfactory learning results in attainment at Year 6 that is below nationally expected levels. Pupils' attainment in history is negatively affected by the lack of time spent on the subject.

12. Regarding the several elements of pupils' personal development, their social development is very good, and good for moral development. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils' cultural development in terms of appreciation and understanding of their local and national heritage is satisfactory. However, the development of their understanding and appreciation of the richness and diversity of cultures other than their own is unsatisfactory.

13. The above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in relation to prior attainment and the targets in their individual education plans. This results in many achieving nationally expected levels. However, higher attaining pupils are not always provided with tasks sufficiently well matched to their stages of learning. Consequently, in a variety of subjects, such pupils have been underachieving.

14. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels for end of Year 6 assessments in English and mathematics for 2001, fell a long way short of the targets set by the local education authority. However, when taking into account the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, the targets for each subject were very optimistic. The school is now working towards realistic and challenging targets to ensure pupils currently in Year 6 achieve their full potential.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils have good, positive attitudes to their work. In 73 per cent of lessons observed, pupils' attitudes were good or very good. The great majority of pupils are keen to respond to challenge and enthusiastic when successful, as was seen in a Year 6 information and communication technology lesson, where expectations were high and the tasks challenging. Pupil response is particularly good where the pace is brisk and the tasks set are both demanding and appropriate. In most lessons, there is a positive, industrious atmosphere. In the few lessons seen where the pupils' response was less than satisfactory, the tasks were too difficult or the teacher's pupil management strategies were inadequate. Children in the reception classes arrive in their classrooms confidently and settle quickly to well established routines. Those with duties, such as taking the register to the office, do so confidently and with minimal fuss. They respond well to the friendly and supportive atmosphere in their classes. Pupils take advantage of out-of-school opportunities, such as the line dancing class, which was well attended by about forty pupils of all ages and both sexes.

16. Behaviour is good. Standards of behaviour declined since the last inspection, but the current headteacher has made it a prime objective, and as a result, standards have improved. The great majority of pupils are attentive in lessons and respectful to their teachers. They are polite and helpful to visitors, respect school resources and comply with their class rules – to which they contributed. Parents continue to be concerned about behaviour but their concerns relate to a small number of pupils with specific behavioural problems. Lunch – entirely packed meals – is taken both in the hall and classrooms. Grace is said during which pupils are appropriately respectful. Pupils are less orderly in moving about the school; possibly because of the cramped conditions in which most of them work, they are inclined to erupt into the playground when released from lessons. Play is vigorous, often physical with much horseplay, but rarely oppressive. The school is free of racial or gender harassment and pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are fully involved in all its activities. There have been eleven exclusions over the preceding year, all for fixed periods and all involving different pupils.

17. Personal development is satisfactory. Through discussions in 'circle time'⁵ and religious education lessons, pupils are beginning to appreciate the impact of their actions upon others. This understanding is aided by their involvement in agreeing their own class rules. Older pupils willingly accept duties and carry them out. They are aware of their responsibilities towards younger children: for example a group of Year 6 pupils read to reception children in a lunch hour. All Year 6 pupils have responsibilities, from looking after young children at break time to setting up the hall for assembly. Some pupils volunteer for additional tasks: for example a trio of Year 5 and 6 girls was seen spending a lunch break cutting book tokens from potato crisp packets. Pupils, however, demonstrate less initiative in the management of their own learning, in part because of the extent to which learning is

⁵ In these lessons, pupils sit in a circle and through agreed rules, have the opportunity to speak and listen to each other talking about issues, which touch them all.

teacher directed. The unavailability of the school library does not help pupils develop independence.

18. Relationships are very good and a strength of the school. In many lessons, learning is enhanced by the positive rapport between teachers and pupils. Pupils are treated with respect and their contributions in class are valued. The special educational needs co-ordinator has especially good, sensitive relationships with children who have many educational, social and emotional problems. Relationships between pupils and classroom assistants are particularly supportive. Pupils work well in pairs or groups, share ideas and readily applaud each other's good efforts. The youngest children in the reception classes are beginning to develop good relations with each other, as was seen in a 'circle time' session in which all took turns to speak, and remained silent whilst other were speaking.

19. Attendance is poor. For the last complete academic year, attendance was 91.2 per cent, placing the school in the bottom 10 per cent nationally. Unauthorised absence, at 1.3 per cent was above the national average. However, figures for the most recent half term show an improvement, with attendance approaching 95 per cent, which is marginally better than the national average. Unauthorised absence remains high. The majority of pupils arrive for school on time, but there is a hard core of persistent latecomers. Late arrivals are recorded at the school office, to which they have to report and, where necessary, they are referred to the education social worker. Registration is carried out promptly and efficiently.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. During the inspection the quality of teaching was good in half the lessons observed. This included all teachers and a representative sample of learning support assistants' work with pupils. Evidence from a combination of scrutiny of pupils' past work and the school's results in national tests does not confirm that teaching has always been this good, particularly with regard to ensuring that higher achieving pupils reach their full potential.

21. The school is aware of some inconsistency in teaching and has focused on the quality of teaching and its effect on learning, as the top priority of the current school development plan. Part of the success of teachers as seen in a variety of classes by inspectors is the result of the much improved systematic monitoring of teaching by the head and local education office adviser over the past year. Staff strengths and weaknesses are being identified and effectively supported through good access to training opportunities, and arranging for teachers to observe colleagues, some in other schools.

22. Of the ninety-eight lessons seen all but five were at least satisfactory, a half were good or better, and one in six was very good. Two sessions, one for special education needs work and one for Year 6 history, were judged excellent. In all thirteen teachers had at least one good lesson and seven had very good sessions. Four different teachers accounted for the five less than satisfactory lessons and these concerned classes in Years 3, 4, and 5.

23. Teaching for children in the Foundation Stage in reception was consistently at least satisfactory with about a third good. Strengths are promoting communication, language and literacy skills and children's personal and social development. As a result children make good progress from a below average start, get on well together and behave well. Areas to work at are in increasing opportunities for children to become more independent, make more choices and show initiative.

24. In Years 1 and 2 teaching was never less than satisfactory with three-fifths good and one in six lessons very good. Because of this standards for seven year olds were judged as being in line with national expectations in all subjects by the inspection team.

25. For pupils aged between eight and eleven teaching was satisfactory or better in nine out of ten lessons, with about a third very good. Teaching in Year 6 was particularly strong, and over time this is having very positive effects on pupils' achievements and standards. The school's performance in end of year national tests is poised to improve this year as a result of improvements to this provision. An especially good example of successful teaching in this phase is in the use of artefacts in history to encourage pupils' enquiry skills. However, one in eleven teaching sessions for this age group was unsatisfactory. This was the result of a lack teachers' knowledge and understanding of physical education and religious education, confused objectives, and some elements of pupil management.

26. Teaching and support for special educational needs is consistently good, often very good and occasionally excellent. Support is underpinned by very good assessment and record keeping, and well communicated targets based on very good individual education plans. Teachers and pupils are very well supported by learning support assistants and much of the success of provision is a direct result of this.

27. Strengths of teaching throughout the school are particularly in literacy; and more generally in numeracy. The quality of planning supports staff very effectively and often enables pupils to make good progress (especially in English). All of the good teaching observed during the inspection was deep rooted in good planning which serves as a good model for continued success. Throughout the school relationships were judged very good. There is a high degree of trust between pupils and staff and pupils are not afraid to make mistakes. In the best lessons teachers manage pupils well, and ask questions which encourage pupils to answer with reasoned comments, reflecting their opinions and preferences. This has good effects on both pupils' personal development and literacy skills. ICT teaching is good with staff making very good use of new equipment to promote learning.

28. Weaknesses, which affect more than simply those lessons judged unsatisfactory, and apply to a variety of classes across the school, feature:

- A lack of pace, with staff often overdirecting pupils, spending too much time on introductions, and in some classes allowing time to slip between activities;
- Insufficient challenge for more able pupils to help them reach higher than expected levels;
- Some lack of understanding of the National Curriculum levels to confirm teachers' expectations of pupils' performance. This is most obvious in music, physical education and religious education, but in some other lessons; for example in science and mathematics, this negatively affects pupils' achievement;
- Inconsistent marking, which has not sufficiently monitored pupils' work and does not show pupils how to improve. The school is aware of this and has very recently introduced a new policy for presentation of pupils' work to address the situation.

29. The quality of teaching in extracurricular activities is good because of the enthusiasm of the staff and very good quality relationships: for example three staff and forty children with three parents, having great fun in line dancing.

30. Pupils' results in statutory tests over a four year period appear to indicate that the quality of teaching slipped since the last inspection, suffering from a lack of direction and a variety of staff changes. Statistics from this report indicate that the school's procedures for performance management are proving effective, and that overall the quality of teaching is being improved. Further improvements are likely, especially when curriculum co-ordinators (or members of planning teams) have greater opportunities to monitor the teaching in their subjects.

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

31. The curriculum that the school provides for children in the Foundation Stage of learning is satisfactory, although elements of the curriculum, which rely on outdoor facilities, are unsatisfactory, due to a lack of specific resources. The curriculum for the rest of the school has unsatisfactory elements. At the last inspection, the curriculum was broad and balanced. Since that time, the emphasis on English, numeracy and information and communication technology has somewhat deflected the school from a close enough look at other areas of the curriculum.

32. There is not enough emphasis on religious education, and arrangements for personal and social education have weaknesses. The policy and planning for personal and social education, with the exception of the Foundation Stage of learning, have been neglected for some time and will only shortly be addressed, with the appointment of a new member of staff with responsibility in this area. Provision for English, special educational needs and ICT are strong elements of the curriculum.

33. There is an unsatisfactory balance in the curriculum, which affects history. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 wait over four terms for further access to the subject. This does not allow for the regular building up of knowledge and understanding in a step-by-step way. The school has only recently devised an overall plan for the curriculum across the school and is now aware of some of its weaknesses.

34. The curriculum is relevant, as the school has adopted the nationally recommended schemes of work for subjects other than English and mathematics, where it uses the appropriate national strategies. The school makes effective use in particular of the National Literacy Strategy, to which it adds a good range of useful assessments and target setting. It makes satisfactory use of the National Numeracy Strategy, but has not yet developed its assessment strategies as successfully.

35. Provision for special educational needs is very good and offers pupils very good support based on individual targets. Such pupils receive extra help which successfully ensures that the curriculum for them is relevant and regularly reviewed.

36. Medium term planning, for subjects other than literacy and numeracy, highlight learning objectives and assessment opportunities. In order to support teachers, the school has developed a further element of planning which breaks the term's plans into units, which are shown over the individual weeks of the term. However, objectives do not yet show accurately enough the levels at which pupils will be working. Where teachers have insufficient knowledge of the levels of the National Curriculum, this omission in planning often means that teachers are not yet able to take the most able children forward, at pace, to the next step in their learning.

37. In the previous report, extracurricular activities were very successful, due to the particular skills and efforts of one teacher. Since his departure, the school and parents have been concerned to improve the situation. Whilst the school has not yet got back to its previous very high standards in both quantity and quality of extracurricular activities, it has made significant progress. Apart from a wide range of sporting activities, the school continues to offer chess, choir, orchestra and line dancing for older pupils.

38. There still remains some doubt in the minds of parents, as to how effective the current homework policy is. During the inspection, homework was seen being set and discussed in a small number of classes. It may be useful for the school to remind both new staff and parents as to the detail and practical implementation of this policy, in order to make it more successful. However, overall homework provision was judged as satisfactory.

39. The school has good links with its local community, although it has suffered badly from vandalism in the recent past. The school itself organises a Birchfield tournament in the

summer for local schools and a local footwear retailer provided prizes and trophies at the school's own sports day. Local secondary school pupils visit the school to take part in work experience, whilst the school makes good use of the places of interest in the vicinity in order to support its curriculum.

40. The school has good links with local playgroups and very good links with Bucklers Mead secondary school, to which most pupils transfer at age eleven. Within the subjects of science and information and communication technology, teachers from the secondary school make regular, scheduled visits in order to support both teachers and pupils in these subjects, with good results especially in ICT. At the same time a small number of the higher attaining pupils in mathematics, science and design and technology attend occasional 'master classes' at the secondary school, in order to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills.

41. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Strengths noted at the last inspection in moral and social development are maintained; spiritual development remains satisfactory, whilst provision for cultural development has apparently slipped somewhat.

42. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils are beginning to develop their own values and beliefs as well as an awareness of others; for example in work seen in religious education in Year 3, pupils examined the prayer practices of other religions and drew comparisons with their own. In Year 5 a Qu'ran is displayed respectfully giving pupils the opportunity to appreciate the beliefs of others. Although not all pupils are able to express their feelings effectively, they showed an appreciation of what excites and moves them as they watched their teacher create characters on the interactive white board during an information and communication technology lesson. The room was filled with whoops of delight as characters appeared on the screen, with one pupil saying, 'Cor, it looks like a man!' Pupils are beginning to see the wonders of modern technology.

43. Unfortunately, whilst other moments showing that pupils are beginning to develop spiritually, were noted, the teachers had planned none of them. They make best use of these moments as they occur, but future development in this area needs to fix more on planning rather than simply capturing the moment. In a single example, a display in Year 2, of tree bark, shells and other natural objects focused on drawing the attention of pupils to 'The wonders of nature'. This clearly showed pupils the beauty of God's created world, and gave them a good opportunity to develop an appreciation for the intangible.

44. The part played by collective worship in providing pupils with opportunities to develop spiritually, is not yet well enough developed. Several acts of worship failed to meet requirements or met them only in part. Whilst stories were told well and linked to a planned theme, opportunities for pupils to reflect on the themes, in order to see the relevance of them in their own lives, were limited. This was caused mainly by lack of time and help from the leaders in setting a suitable framework for reflection. On occasions little or no reference was made to a deity, a song of praise was not used, and pupils were not sufficiently involved.

45. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. Pupils are developing an understanding of common values and a growing ability to put these values into their own lives. As a result, pupils' behaviour and general attitudes to school, work and life are improving. The school has provided all classes with a 'Rights' declaration, in which the rights of pupils to work and enjoy their schooling are plain for all to see. At the same time, classes have developed their own rules. Class teachers provide good role models for their pupils and help guide them to decisions about a range of issues. Pupils in Year 6 were discussing a wide range of issues about life, death and world problems, giving them opportunities to express their own views and listen to the views of others about life situations.

46. Social development is provided for very well by the school and enables pupils to work very well together in a range of situations. As a result, behaviour overall has improved, pupils are enthusiastic about school, and relationships between pupils are very positive. Pupils are seen working in pairs in the ICT suite, older pupils are seen reading with the youngest pupils, and Year 6 pupils work together well putting rhythmic music to words from Macbeth. The school gives all Year 6 pupils responsible tasks from 'Playtime Buddies' to 'Office helpers'. Through these jobs pupils gain an understanding of team work and support the organisation of the school. In the same way, residential visits for Years 4 and 6 give those pupils an opportunity to be away from home, gain self confidence and self reliance; valuable aspects of social development.

47. The school has not yet developed a clear strategy on teaching other aspects of citizenship and as a result, pupils have little knowledge of forms of government, representing the views of others and open discussion on aspects of national life. Here, the school council, soon to be redeveloped will have some impact.

48. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory overall. It is better when applied to pupils' own national culture and heritage, but weaker when linked with multicultural development and pupils' growing ability to understand and take their place in a culturally diverse world. National Curriculum work in history and geography helps pupils to understand their own cultural heritage as they learn about life in Tudor and Victorian times. Geographical studies are carried out in the local area, with visits to support learning. However, art and music give too little support to pupils' cultural development. There is little art work by famous artists on display and even less by artists from ethnic minority backgrounds. Music played each day in assemblies is rarely discussed or mentioned during the assemblies, missing valuable opportunities to introduce pupils to a range of music.

49. The school has tried to redress the imbalance in provision for multicultural awareness by the use of an Arts Week, destined to become an annual event. Whilst this was important in introducing pupils to the art, music and other cultural aspects of life in a different part of the world, it is seen in stark contrast to the lack of regular access for pupils to appreciate the diversity and interdependence of other cultures, addressing and promoting race equality.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

50. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. The headteacher is responsible for child protection; the appropriate procedures are in place. A sub committee of the governing body is responsible for premises, including health and safety matters. The premises are regularly inspected. Physical education apparatus, fire fighting equipment and electrical items are regularly tested for safety. Pupils' medical needs are well looked after. The school has a medical room which is staffed at break and lunch times by a trained first aider. Records of treatments are kept and parents informed if children sustain bumps to the head. The school is aware of pupils with particular medical conditions. In addition to its statutory duties, the school offers a considerable degree of care and support to its pupils, especially the most vulnerable. Instances of effective but unobtrusive action to further pupils' well being are not infrequent.

51. The school has good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. However, in the last complete academic year, attendance levels have been well below the national average for primary schools. A computerised attendance recording system has been introduced which readily identifies poor attenders. The school has analysed attendance statistics and is aware of the reasons for non attendance – which are frequently social and domestic. Letters are sent to parents and, where necessary, followed up by the education social worker who makes weekly visits to the school. When children are absent for two days without explanation, the school office staff phone the parents. Newsletters contain frequent reminders about attendance and punctuality. Whilst some families do take term time holidays, the incidence is not so great as to pose a problem. An analysis of attendance data

for the first half of the spring term 2002 shows overall attendance levels close to the national average, but unauthorised absence remains high.

52. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. Behaviour standards deteriorated during the period of instability between headteachers and were the cause of considerable parental concern. The present headteacher has addressed behaviour standards as a matter of priority, resulting in a significant improvement. Children are introduced to the school's behavioural expectations as soon as they join reception. These expectations are underpinned by a series of rewards designed to improve pupils' self esteem – 'child of the week' for example. A co-operative approach to work is encouraged by group rewards such as table points. Pupils discuss and agree their own class rules and class teachers develop their own reward variations. The overall approach to discipline, however, is consistent. All teachers keep behaviour logs, as do lunch time supervisors. The headteacher keeps his own record of serious misbehaviour and all records are monitored for recurrence. Where necessary, the school will set up long term behaviour contracts with pupils. Bullying is dealt with by the headteacher and appropriate records are kept. Parents are involved as necessary. At the Ofsted pre-inspection meeting parents agreed that instances of bullying were dealt with promptly. The school has had no instances of racial abuse.

53. In keeping with the school's good ethos of care, pupils' personal development is well monitored. Staff know pupils and their circumstances well and this knowledge, together with the very good relationships, ensures good informal support. Informal support is backed up by class records, in which staff note pupils' personal development - the number of occasions upon which the pupil was 'child of the week' for instance - and keep track of social, friendship or domestic problems which might affect the child's performance in class. The special educational needs co-ordinator is particularly sensitive to such issues in her support of pupils.

54. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic attainment and progress are satisfactory overall. They are very good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science. In ICT, the school has recently introduced basic procedures to record skills taught, and to monitor and assess pupils' performance as part of a class. Assessment of what pupils know and can do in religious education is unsatisfactory. As yet, there is no 'whole school' approach to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding in the 'non core' subjects. Whilst attainment in English, mathematics and science is stated clearly within annual report forms, information relating to performance in other subjects does not always give a clear indication of pupils' achievements. Management of assessment throughout the school is unsatisfactory in a lack of specific responsibility for its co-ordination. The policy, which was written in 1996, no longer provides sufficient guidance for current required practice, and is in need of review. A member of staff is to be trained as assessment co-ordinator for the next academic year.

55. Teachers carry out assessments at particular points in pupils' time in school, including a baseline profile on entry to reception. In addition to optional and statutory end of year assessments in English, mathematics and science, pupils are assessed frequently and regularly in reading, spelling and writing. These assessments, together with 'end of topic' tests, enable staff to track pupils' progress as they move through the school and to set pupils individual targets in literacy and numeracy. In this respect, the school has gone some way to address the criticism in the last report that the school made insufficient use of assessment information. However, use of assessment information is still unsatisfactory in that, with the exception of English, not enough use has been made of data to target the needs of higher attaining pupils within lessons.

56. The school is at the early stages of analysing end of year assessment data with a view to modifying curriculum provision to raise standards. Following analysis of end of Year 2 and Year 6 assessments for 2001 in English and mathematics, provision was modified to raise attainment in specific areas of the curriculum. However, this practice has yet to be carried out for science. Although staff give pupils good oral feedback and encouragement in lessons,

the quality of written marking is inconsistent. Too often, pupils are given insufficient information as to what they must do to improve.

57. Assessment for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Needs are identified and effectively targeted. All pupils on the school's register of special educational needs are the subject of good individual education plans which highlight small steps that, when achieved, will ensure pupils make progress. Such pupils' performance is well documented, and very good tracking and monitoring ensures pupils are fully included in school life.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

58. The school works hard at building up good, effective links with parents. Parents are provided with information of good quality about the school and their children's progress. New parents are given a helpful induction pack of information, and invited to meetings before their children join the school. Meetings are held to explain the results of the children's assessment on entry to school (baseline assessment). The headteacher issues regular newsletters giving good notice of forthcoming events and matters of whole school importance. Class teachers give parents advance notice of the topics their children will be studying each term. Parents are consulted on matters such as the school's homework policy. An information evening on ICT was arranged for parents. Pupils' annual reports comply with statutory requirements and are satisfactory. Detailed information regarding the child's attainment and progress, with targets for future endeavour are provided for English, science and mathematics. In other subjects, reports address subject coverage and the child's attitude and they are descriptive rather than evaluative. Pupils contribute their own view of the year's work. Parents appreciate the opportunity to comment on the report, but some of those attending the Ofsted pre-inspection meeting and seen during the inspection, considered that the reports' tone was too impersonal. Parents are offered a meeting to discuss the report, and there are two further formal consultation evenings in the year. Take-up is estimated at 85 per cent. Parents appreciate teachers' readiness to meet them, to resolve minor issues informally. Twenty-one per cent of parents responding to the Ofsted pre-inspection questionnaire considered that they were insufficiently well informed regarding their children's progress. Inspection evidence shows that, whilst pupil annual reports could be more detailed regarding subjects other than English, mathematics and science, the overall availability of information for parents is good

59. Parents contribute well to their children's learning. There is an active school association which works hard to raise funds for the benefit of children's learning – they assist with the cost of the annual residential visits for example. Parent volunteers help in classrooms and with after school clubs. The majority of parents co-operate with the home-school agreement and support children's homework. Most of the home-school reading records seen during the inspection contained evidence of parental support for children's reading. The school has its full quota of parent governors and, at the time of the last vacancy, an election was necessary.

60. Parents' views of the school are positive. Parents like the approachability of the staff and the fact that their children are happy. The great majority of respondents to the Ofsted pre-inspection questionnaire felt that the school expected children to work hard and that its values helped children to become mature and responsible. Although 80 per cent of respondents to the questionnaire considered behaviour to be good, both before and during the inspection, a number of concerns about behaviour were expressed. Some of these related to individual pupils with particular behavioural problems. With regard to behaviour generally, it was considered that the standard had declined in the period during which the school had no permanent headteacher. Things were now seen as improving. As one parent put it, "We're on the way up". Standards of behaviour were judged good by the inspection team.

61. Twenty-seven per cent of respondents to the Ofsted pre-inspection questionnaire were dissatisfied with the amount of homework set. Some considered that there was a particular issue in Years 5 and 6. However, inspection evidence shows that the school makes satisfactory use of homework. The school consulted parents about its homework policy. Twenty-three per cent were unhappy with the range of extracurricular opportunities offered. This is not borne out by the inspection. There is a comprehensive range of activities for pupils, including a variety of sports, chess, line dancing and opportunities to take part in Christmas drama productions. There are residential visits for Years 4 and 6 to outdoor activity centres.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

62. The school is well led by the headteacher who has clear vision for educational direction. In the year since he has been in post he has sought to raise standards, which year on year test results indicated were falling. However, the most recent 2001 national scores still put the school in the bottom five per cent of all primary schools nationally, mainly as a consequence of too few Year 6 pupils achieving the higher level (Level 5). Nevertheless there were encouraging trends in the performance of the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. This is a credit to the management partnership of the head and special educational needs co-ordinator. The quality of management in this aspect, which affects almost 34 per cent of the school, is judged very good.

63. For many new management initiatives it is too soon to evaluate success. However, in the fundamental area of behaviour, which by report of parents, governors, staff and pupils had deteriorated in the interim period between permanent headteachers, management procedures have been very successful. As a result standards are now good and the school functions in an orderly way for most of the time.

64. The head has drawn together an improvement plan which addresses the priorities he has established with the deputy, senior management team and governors. This plan sets targets, identifies timescales and shows how intentions will be funded. It is being successful in developing the quality of teaching, and consequently learning. It provides a good tool for the management of the school and is regularly reviewed.

65. A radical change in the school's management structure has been the move away from subject co-ordinators other than for English, mathematics, science and ICT. The remaining subjects are now led by staff teams of four or five teachers with the intention of improving communication and understanding. Whilst it may be too soon to judge how effective this will be, and at the same time acknowledging the good rolling programme which will ensure each subject is in turn a main focus, inspectors found that as yet too little has been accomplished in some subjects. This particularly applies to collecting and interpreting assessment information; and to monitoring planning, standards and teaching in order to identify strengths and weaknesses. In religious education and music this has resulted in standards being unsatisfactory when pupils leave the school. It has not prevented aspects of physical education teaching being unsatisfactory, nor protected history and design and technology from being underemphasised in some classes. Staff are supportive and committed to raising standards and are being fashioned into a team with a common purpose by the head. However, it appears some staff do not yet fully understand their roles in this new system. The senior management team is aware of this and are looking at ways of improving the situation to clarify responsibilities.

66. Governors, some of whom are new, give the school good support. They are well informed by the headteacher and meet all statutory obligations with the exception of ensuring that all acts of collective worship fully meet requirements. Governors are appropriately organised in committees with most obvious success in managing the many weaknesses of the building and site, supporting special needs, and monitoring financial matters. Together

the head, administrative staff and governors have overcome the many negative comments raised by the local authority auditors in a review of accounts just before the head was appointed. Day to day finances are efficiently run and the good work of office staff is a positive feature of the school's management.

67. The last report showed the school carried forward over nine per cent of its budget. This is much above recommended levels and continues to be the case. However, such funds are earmarked towards equipping the two new classrooms to be built this year, to improve resources, and to protect from relative increases in staffing costs which may result from fluctuations in numbers on roll.

68. The inspection of June 1997 made two major recommendations for improvement. These aspects have been partly addressed. Links with parents have been strengthened to the point where communication is considered good and the school is well supported. However there is still room to improve the quality of information in reports to tell parents more about pupils' achievements. Assessment procedures have been introduced in English, mathematics and science to provide data which can be used to judge progress. However such opportunities are still lacking in other subjects and this is most obvious in the two other core areas of ICT and religious education. Apart from English, where target setting is good, insufficient use has been made of information derived from assessment either to raise expectations for the individual child or modify the curriculum. Given the fall off in behaviour and the marked decline in standards in the intervening period, and the hitherto incomplete nature of work on the above, the formal judgement on the school's improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. However, there has been rapid progress in the last year, with a clearer analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses, the successful introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, considerably improved resources for ICT, and the application of performance management as a tool to set targets for staff development. With these now in place, and the obvious commitment of head and deputy, the school is suitably placed for future development.

69. Staff, pupils and other adults in the school now work well as a team encouraged by the direction of the headteacher. They value contributions to the school and welcome visitors well. There is an inclusive acceptance of pupils with special needs in the school but there is an issue with the removal of these pupils from parts of some lessons and the time allocated for the teaching of history.

70. The school is sufficiently staffed to teach the full range of the National Curriculum. It has a very effective induction programme for new teachers and supports newly qualified teachers well. The decisions on the deployment of staff are well founded in the drive to raise standards, and the focus on the provision for special educational needs is very effective. The school has a very good, very well trained and very well led team of classroom support assistants who are valued by all staff for their skills. The school is fortunate in the high quality of other adults that are employed in the school to support pupils and the management of the school. There is a clear programme of support and training in place for all staff and this is beginning to have an impact on the standards in English, mathematics and ICT.

71. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The classrooms in the main building, especially those used by Years 2 and 3 are too small, having regard to the numbers and ages of pupils using them. They are poorly designed as each has areas which are out of the teacher's view. The classrooms open on to a wide, shared thoroughfare in which small groups of pupils work, or through which they pass en route to the hall. There are no doors. Noise, therefore, can be distracting. The small size of the classrooms impedes pupils' learning; it is difficult for teachers to manage practical activities such as art or science in such a small space. Pupil safety is another consideration. The school has insufficient storage space; consequently the shared areas have a cluttered appearance. Staff work hard to create stimulating displays of pupils' work in these areas. The hall has too small a useable area. Furniture (such as tables and chairs for lunch), physical education apparatus and the piano are stored around the

periphery of the hall and its design incorporates steel pillars. Teachers manage activities such as dance or physical education well, but the hazards to pupil safety are obvious. There are six temporary buildings in the grounds; five are occupied by classrooms and the sixth is the school library. The classrooms are less cramped than those in the main building but time is wasted in moving pupils to and from the main building. The library is not in regular use, thereby minimising pupils' opportunities for independent research; the roof leaks. There is no separate secure play area for the Foundation Stage. The school is surrounded by spacious grounds, most of which is grass (and therefore of little use in the winter). Tarmac play space is barely adequate for the number of pupils but break times are staggered, thus minimising the problem. The concrete paths around the main building are too narrow; it is not possible for parents with pushchairs - who have to use that route to get to the reception classes - to pass each other. The school adjoins a public open space, much used by people walking dogs. In several places, the perimeter fence has been broken down. There is, therefore, nothing to prevent dog faeces (with the attendant health hazard) from fouling the school grounds. It is understood that a six-phase rebuilding programme is planned, with the addition of two new classrooms imminent.

72. Overall, the school provides satisfactory learning resources for the curriculum. Since the last inspection, at which time resources for design and technology were noted as being unsatisfactory, the school has improved the resourcing of this curriculum area. Whilst subjects such as ICT, physical education and support for pupils with special educational needs have significantly improved, there are still weaknesses in other areas. Resources for geography are unsatisfactory as is the provision for large and wheeled outside play equipment for pupils in the Foundation Stage of learning. In addition, when pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 classes carry out mathematics at the same time, the resources available are not always sufficient to support learning.

73. When outcomes in terms of standards are compared with what the school provides in curriculum opportunities and the quality of teaching, and this is matched against spending, Birchfield Primary currently gives reasonable, but improving, value for money. This is less positive than the judgement of the last report where the school gave 'good value'. The main reason for this features the drop over a four year period in standards as recorded in National Curriculum tests for eleven year olds. As this situation is being addressed, the value the school gives continues to improve.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

74. In order to further improve the school governors, headteacher and staff should:

Raise standards still further in English, mathematics and science in order that the school's performance in National Curriculum assessments for eleven year olds is improved when compared with all and similar schools:

- Ensuring that higher attaining pupils are not underachieving; are always sufficiently challenged; and that the proportions achieving higher National Curriculum levels are in line with the national averages.

Paragraphs: 1, 3, 5, 8, 13, 14, 20, 28, 36, 55, 56, 62, 73, 78, 83, 84, 89, 93, 97, 98, 105, 106, 107, 109, 111, 112, 117, 118.

Develop still further the management roles of teachers to:

- Clarify subject specific responsibilities;
- Enable staff to monitor standards, planning and teaching in their subjects;

- Complete, as programmed, updating of schemes of work for each subject which ensure that all elements are sufficiently emphasized, and identify assessment opportunities to gauge progress by;
- Make yet more use of information available from assessment to evaluate the success of provision and set targets.

Paragraphs: 3, 30, 31, 33, 54, 55, 56, 65, 68, 69, 84, 105, 106, 107, 109, 118, 124, 130, 133, 134, 135, 140, 151, 156, 157, 162, 167, 169.

Improve still further the quality of teaching and learning by:

- Improving the use of time in some lessons;
- Developing teachers' knowledge and understanding of the teaching of religious education, music and physical education;
- Improving the consistency of teachers' marking of pupils' work to identify how improvements can be made;
- Ensuring that higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged.

Paragraphs: 22, 25, 28, 36, 55, 56, 65, 78, 83, 84, 93, 97, 98, 101, 103, 105, 107, 109, 110, 111, 112, 117, 148, 152, 156, 161, 162, 164, 167.

It is acknowledged that the school, being aware of these three areas for improvement, has included them in its development plan.

The following more minor issues should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan:

- Improving, as planned, resources for mathematics teaching, notably in Years 1 and 2, geography, history, music, and with regard to large wheeled and climbing equipment for outdoor use for those in the Foundation Stage.

Paragraphs: 31, 72, 86, 108, 133, 134, 140, 163.

- Raising attendance levels towards the national average and reducing incidences of unauthorised absence and lateness.

Paragraphs: 19, 51.

- Continuing to work with the local authority to improve the quality of accommodation.

Paragraphs: 71, 163.

- Developing more opportunities for pupils to become aware of multicultural issues which are part of life in the UK today.

Paragraphs: 12, 48, 49, 85, 122, 157, 164.

- Ensuring that the school's acts of collective worship always meet statutory requirements.

Paragraphs: 43, 44, 66.

- Improving library provision and use, to provide more opportunities to develop pupils' independent research skills.

Paragraph: 17, 71, 92.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

98

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	15	33	43	5	0	0
Percentage	2	15	34	44	5	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)

410

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

82

Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

0

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

140

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

27

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

22

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.5
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	29	37	66

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	27	29
	Girls	35	36	37
	Total	61	63	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (91)	95 (91)	100 (88)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	28	29	28
	Girls	36	36	35
	Total	64	65	63
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (90)	98 (84)	95 (95)
	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 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	36	28	64

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	30
	Girls	15	10	23
	Total	30	25	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	47 (76)	39 (56)	83 (82)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	16	20
	Girls	16	12	15
	Total	35	28	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	55 (77)	44 (74)	56 (79)
	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	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	407
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.2
Average class size	29.2

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	213

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	11	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000/1
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	£
Total income	766514
Total expenditure	750256
Expenditure per pupil	3014
Balance brought forward from previous year	58676
Balance carried forward to next year	74934

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5.6

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	409
Number of questionnaires returned	91

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	52	7	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	50	8	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	54	13	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	45	26	2	1
The teaching is good.	47	44	6	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	48	19	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	44	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	40	56	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	26	53	18	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	38	49	9	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	53	9	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	45	14	10	11

Due to rounding percentages do not total 100.

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

75. The last inspection reported that the provision for children in the Foundation Stage was good. Provision for children in both reception classes is currently satisfactory. This reflects satisfactory progress since the previous inspection due to the number of recent changes, which have taken place in the curriculum requirements for children of this age. There are particular strengths in the development children's personal, social and emotional skills, and in speaking and listening skills. Good teaching and the appropriate curriculum ensure that children make better than expected progress in learning new skills, especially in early reading and writing. By the end of the reception year the majority of children attain the Early Learning Goals in personal, social and emotional development, creative and physical development and in counting and phonic skills. They are unlikely to attain the goals in other aspects of communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world.

76. Children start school in the September before their fifth birthday. There are very good links with the local playgroup. Reception teachers visit the playgroup regularly. This helps children to start school with confidence. Children visit with their parents for two afternoon sessions, taking part in a range of activities together. This provides a good opportunity for the parents to discuss any concerns and talk to class teachers. An evening is held for parents to learn about the work and procedures of the school. The school has developed a good starting school pack, which gives detailed information about procedures, future dates and uniform. The detailed information forms and information received from local playgroups give the school a good knowledge of children's needs before they start. These good induction procedures ensure that children soon settle to school routines and leave their parents confidently. Parents are welcomed into the classroom at the beginning of the day and this has developed good relationships between home and school.

77. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Particular emphasis is given to pupils' personal development and their early literacy skills and this means that they quickly develop very good attitudes to learning. Most activities are very well supported by an adult so that children get the individual attention they require. All adults working in the reception classes know the children extremely well and use this information to plan and deliver lessons, which are matched very well to the children's individual learning needs. This is particularly effective to provide suitable tasks for pupils who have special educational needs, who as a consequence achieve very well. Relationships are very good between adults and children and with each other. Children play alongside each other very well and sort out any minor problems amicably, knowing their rights and standing up for themselves very sensibly. When given the opportunity children enjoy the responsibility to tidy things away quickly to the proper place. However, the school is aware that some opportunities are missed to promote children's independence and enable them to make choices. Classrooms are very welcoming with attractive displays and well organised toys and equipment. This encourages the children to keep things tidy and to look after the classrooms themselves.

78. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. There is detailed planning which covers all areas of learning and identifies closely the learning intention for every day in every area within the reception classes. Planning for literacy and numeracy lessons is good. This is because there are very focused learning objectives which clearly outline what the children are expected to learn. In other areas of learning the objectives are sometimes too broad and then planning focuses too much on what the children will do rather than on what they will learn. Consequently those who are capable of higher achievement are not always challenged sufficiently well.

Personal, social and emotional development

79. Good opportunities are planned for children to develop their personal, social and emotional development and children make good progress in developing social and self care skills. Due to the very structured routines, children settle down quickly on arrival and enjoy the opportunity to share a book with their friends. Children have very good relationships with each other and with adults so that they are confident to ask for help if they need it. They learn to care and look after their clothes as they get changed for physical development activities in the hall and, through the gentle encouragement of adults working with them, many persevere to manage all but the most difficult buttons when dressing. All children can find coats when going out to play and hang these back on the pegs afterwards independently. They cope very well with the older children on the playground and are developing good relationships with them during playtimes and lunchtimes. Children particularly enjoy listening to stories read by Year 6 pupils at least once a week and talking to those who help them at lunchtimes with their food and drink cartons. They share resources very well and take turns readily. Two boys playing a number game worked very well together, giving each other encouragement and help to work out the total on the two dice before working out which numbers came before and after the total. Due to good teaching, by the end of the reception year the majority of children attain the Early Learning Goals for this area of learning and a few children exceed these.

Communication, language and literacy

80. Children enter school with well below average communication, language and literacy skills. Despite good teaching through a well planned curriculum, the majority of children are unlikely to attain the Early Learning Goals in this area of learning by the end of the reception year. All lesson plans outline carefully the vocabulary adults want children to learn. Adults intervene whenever they can, posing children with relevant situations to get them to follow instructions and develop their vocabulary further. Questioning is good and focuses clearly on what teachers want children to learn, and through the gentle prompts, eventually children use the target vocabulary correctly. Children regularly have opportunities to listen and talk to each other. They sit in a circle so that they can all see and hear each other well. This organisation allows them all to see any resources being used by the teacher in lessons. During a discussion about the half term holiday activities the children were fascinated by the collection of shells and pebbles used by the teacher to gain and focus their attention on the discussions. The resources prompted the children to talk about a range of activities and extend the vocabulary used to wider contexts other than playing outside, watching television and visiting relatives. This activity provided a suitable context and motivated the children to write about holidays in the following session.

81. Early reading skills are developed well through well chosen stories and accounts, which interest the children and motivate them to listen. The current 'growing' topic provides good opportunities for children to look at books, which give instructions on how to plant a variety of seeds. Children follow these instructions closely when planting the bean seeds, which will be used for future work in science activities. The story of Jack and the Beanstalk contains interesting characters for the children to act. This they do with enthusiasm during an independent activity reflecting their knowledge of story sequence. They recall the main parts of the story and say the 'Fee Fi Fo Fum' dialogue with great expression. Individual reading skills are well developed through a structured reading scheme. Children enjoy reading. Higher attaining children use pictures and knowledge of initial sounds to help them to work out a new word. Thus one child was able to work out the word 'rabbit' because she knew the word started with 'r'. All children treat books with care, and even those at the early stages of reading make good attempts at having a go at what they think the words say. Parents support their children regularly at home by sharing books and helping them to learn the words on cards.

82. Particular focus has been given to developing children's writing recently and this is having a positive effect on standards. The children are confident to write and when asked all can 'read back' what they have written. Higher attaining children are beginning to learn how to

spell a number of frequently used words. Teachers prompt them to listen very carefully to all the sounds in words that they cannot spell yet and to identify which letters make those sounds. This means that all children are able to write at least the first letter of the words they need. Children practise by copying or remembering their first name at every opportunity which means that they can read this, and a few write it without adult help. Higher attaining children are able to write both first and second names without help. Due to particular emphasis on handwriting skills, all children have a suitable pencil grip and are beginning to form most letters correctly.

Mathematical development

83. Satisfactory teaching ensures that children make satisfactory progress in mathematical development. Due to the particular emphasis placed on counting rhymes and games, children make good progress in counting and number recognition activities and by the end of the reception year, the majority attain the Early Learning Goals. Activities are well planned and learning takes place through suitable games and play situations. Children particularly enjoyed the pass the parcel game adapted to develop their counting skills. Each time the music stopped the children took turns to remove either one or two objects and the accumulated total was counted, and matching numerals were found for each group of objects. Children followed the rules sensibly and waited for the music to stop eagerly to see if it was their turn. Group activities are planned so that children work with numbers at their particular level. This is particularly successful with children who have special educational needs. Due to the practical and repetitive nature of the task they soon learn how to count one, two, three and four objects in each group and to recognise the matching numeral. This is less successful with higher attaining children. Although a few can count beyond 20 and can recognise numerals up to 100, they were working with numbers less than 20 during the inspection.

84. Children are not yet attaining the goals linked to addition, subtraction and solving problems in number because too little emphasis is given to these aspects despite the fact that some children are ready to learn this. Lessons are planned too much on what the numeracy strategy content says rather than on the assessment information gathered for each child. Higher attaining children therefore sometimes lose concentration and do not learn as fast as they could. Much of the knowledge and understanding associated with shape and measuring activities is suitably developed through practical activities. Children are able to find a circle, square, triangle and rectangle with some confidence and are beginning to describe how they know it is the particular shape.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

85. The curriculum to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world is satisfactory and, coupled with satisfactory teaching, children make expected progress in this area of learning. Due to the children's low starting point, the majority are unlikely to attain the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year. The curriculum is organised into topics and this helps make learning relevant. This term's growing topic provides good opportunities for children to learn about seeds and plants. A good range of practical and fun activities are planned to develop the children's knowledge and understanding. However, planning identifies too much what children will do in each activity rather than on what they are to learn. Therefore some activities are not always relevant at this particular time. For example, although relevant to the topic, children are asked to identify the stages of growth of a bean plant when they have not yet had the opportunity to see this at first hand. The recent topic about toys gave suitable opportunities for children to develop a sense of time when looking at toys old and new. It provided a good opportunity for them to make models of a favourite toy from recycled boxes and tubes. Children used sellotape, glue and string to join the boxes together to make recognisable models of which they are justly proud. The computer is a great favourite and children have good control of the mouse to select from a menu and create pictures using a

simple paint package. Although the children have suitable opportunities to talk about their own and other people's feelings, there are not enough opportunities provided for them to learn about the cultures of other people.

Physical development

86. Children make satisfactory progress in physical development and by the end of the reception year the majority attain the Early Learning Goals in this area. Pencil control is good. The children hold pencils with a suitable grip and control these when writing their names or drawing pictures. Through the range of making activities on offer, pupils develop good cutting skills. Suitable opportunities are provided for the children to practise throwing and catching skills and control of other equipment including hoops, beanbags and hockey sticks, but these do not take place at regular enough times. This means that the children get very excited when playing with balls and other equipment and their aim is not always accurate due to the over enthusiasm of some children. Children move around the hall and playground with thought to the space available and can throw with satisfactory control. However, there is not enough opportunity for children to develop their balancing, climbing and jumping skills either in the hall or outside. There is no secure outside area for children to use and no large toys including wheeled vehicles. This remains an issue from the last inspection.

Creative development

87. Satisfactory teaching ensures that children make satisfactory progress and by the end of the reception year the majority are likely to attain the Early Learning Goals in creative development. Children's paintings of toys show that they use colours relevant to the theme. This is being extended this term through painting daffodils and other spring flowers, which require the children to choose relevant colours from the paint box. There is little evidence to show that children have experienced mixing colours and when asked none could remember doing this. Children sing well in assemblies, joining in with their favourite songs. They add percussion accompaniments to songs with confidence and can keep the pulse going when singing a favourite nursery rhyme. There is no interactive music activity available for them to explore and investigate how sounds can be made and changed. Children develop their imagination through relevant role play areas although an adult rarely supports these. Dance and drama lessons are often directed so that children copy what the teacher is doing rather than using imagination to develop roles and characters independently.

ENGLISH

88. Results of end of Year 2 National Curriculum assessments for 2001 showed standards in reading and writing to be in line with national averages; consistent with the findings of the previous inspection. When compared with results of similar schools, performance was average in reading but below average in writing. Closer analysis shows the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels was above average in reading, and well above in writing. However, for both elements of English, the proportion gaining the higher level was well below

average. Overall results were creditable considering 27 per cent of pupils assessed had special educational needs. To raise standards further, the school focused on the teaching and assessment of writing, introduced a new handwriting policy, and implemented a government programme of phonics (based on sounds of letters and blends) to supplement provision from within the National Literacy Strategy.

89. The previous inspection reported attainment in English at the end of Year 6 to be average. Standards deteriorated until results for 2001 showed overall attainment to be very low when compared with results of either national or similar schools; placing the school in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. However, over half the pupils assessed were on the school's register of special educational needs. The school failed to achieve the optimistic targets set by the local education authority for the proportion of pupils to achieve the expected level in the end of Year 6 assessments for 2001.

90. Of pupils currently in Year 2, over a third have special educational needs. Inspection evidence confirms overall standards in English to be in line with those expected nationally for their age. When taking into account their below average attainment on entry to Year 1, this represents good learning. For pupils now in Year 6, almost a third are on the school's register of special needs. Although lower than last year, this is well above the national average. Whilst attainment in several aspects of English meet expected levels of performance, overall standards are below average. In addition to the reduction in pupils with special educational needs, the considerable improvement in standards is attributable to:

- Improved use of assessment outcomes to set individual targets and modify curriculum provision;
- Focus on punctuation and quality of handwriting;
- Overall structure and content of writing;
- In-service training for teachers related to teaching aspects of English.

Across the school, closer monitoring has been carried out regarding the effective use of nationally funded literacy support initiatives.

91. Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening skills. At Year 2 and Year 6, standards meet nationally expected levels. The opening and plenary sessions of the literacy hour are used well to focus on this aspect of language development. By the end of Year 2, pupils listen attentively to teachers and other adults, and to each other's contributions in lessons. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, readily take part in oral work, knowing their contributions will be accepted and valued even if they are not accurate. Pupils show growing confidence in asking and answering questions, and are keen to read aloud, to an audience, examples of what they have just read or written. By the end of Year 6, pupils respond readily to questions, discuss constructively, and use a breadth of vocabulary when discussing items of interest, or explaining their views. For example, in an observed lesson, pupils in Year 5 sensibly and confidently discussed the structure and vocabulary of Wordsworth's sonnet, 'Westminster Bridge'.

92. Standards in reading meet nationally expected levels at the end of Years 2 and 6. This reflects good learning, consistent throughout each year group. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support that enables many to attain average standards. Higher attaining pupils are challenged well in reading. By Year 2, most pupils read with fluency and confidence. They have a variety of strategies to decode new words, including a well taught and sequenced programme of phonics. Pupils read with expression and understanding. They express opinions about the main events in the stories they read, and predict what will happen next. Pupils are introduced to simple reference materials; they understand and use the 'index' and 'contents' of a book. By Year 6, the majority of pupils read challenging texts with expression and accuracy, and have a clear awareness of how punctuation determines the way texts are to be read. They have sound comprehension skills and many comment

perceptibly on issues raised in their books. Pupils consider how vocabulary is used to convey mood and to develop characters, setting and plot. Such an example was when higher attaining pupils in Year 6 studied and discussed the mood and imagery within 'The Listeners' by Walter de La Mare. In so doing, pupils used higher order reading skills of inference and deduction together with the scanning of text to substantiate their opinions. When reading poetry, pupils have an appropriate appreciation of alliteration and the use of onomatopoeic words, which they say with enthusiasm and appropriate expression. Inspection evidence confirms the majority of pupils read regularly at home as well as in school. Pupils clearly benefit from the well organised reading sessions held each day for all pupils. Whilst reading skills are used to good advantage in all areas of the curriculum to gain information from reference material, the library is not used as a resource to support pupils' independent learning or research skills.

93. Good learning in Years 1 and 2 results in standards in writing meeting nationally expected levels for pupils aged seven. The teaching of spelling, grammar and punctuation is developed systematically within the structure of the National Literacy Strategy. Pupils have good opportunities to write down their own thoughts, and to extend simple sentences into more complex sentences by using a range of connectives. Pupils use their developing writing skills to compose simple stories. For example, pupils in Year 2 write interesting stories about Katie Morag, a character on the fictitious Island of Struay, and her search for her lost teddy. Pupils write well punctuated stories that have a range of openings. When writing, pupils refer to their individual writing targets and to checklists that prompt them to consider questions such as, 'Does it make sense?' and 'Are the words interesting?' By Year 6, although the majority of pupils work at levels expected for their age, the proportion is not sufficient. As a consequence, standards are below average. Between Years 3 to 6, pupils write for a range of audiences, using a variety of genres. Well crafted poems are written on a number of subjects. Pupils draft and edit reviews and synopses of books, and undertake work on play scripts. In general writing most pupils make satisfactory use of paragraphs, and use correctly a wide range of punctuation.

94. When writing stories, the majority of pupils commence with a clear introduction, followed by a series of well ordered points that lead to a considered conclusion. When writing letters, most pupils use the correct level of formality and appropriate vocabulary for the purpose of the letter they are composing. Effective use is made of dictionaries and thesauruses to support spelling and to develop and broaden vocabulary. The school's focus on punctuation, and on the quality and structure of writing has made a positive impact on standards, as has the emphasis on handwriting. Standards in handwriting are satisfactory. However, in each class there are instances where the quality of handwriting exceeds the levels expected for pupils' age. By the end of Year 6, pupils write in a clear, cursive style. However, the use of word processing programs to enable pupils to write, draft and edit directly on the screen, or for the presentation of completed work, has yet to be developed fully. Pupils' writing skills are used and developed satisfactorily in other subjects. For example, in history, pupils write about World War II and the life of evacuees. They produce interesting accounts of their enjoyable 'Castle Day'. In science, pupils record and write about their investigations.

95. The quality of teaching was judged to be good or better in three-quarters of lessons observed, including a quarter very good. One lesson, for a less able, special educational needs group, was judged to be excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. From Years 3 to 6, pupils are taught literacy in groups that are organised according to pupils' levels of attainment. This enables teachers to focus the content of their lessons on the needs of pupils with a more narrow range of ability. However, within each class pupils are at different stages of learning, and teachers use the structure of the National Literacy Strategy well to plan tasks that are suitably matched to pupils' needs. At the start of each lesson, teachers clearly explain objectives and how they will be developed within the session. Over the week of the inspection, teachers refined and adapted learning objectives and planning in the light of ongoing assessment of what pupils learned. Teachers have good subject knowledge that is

used well to stimulate pupils' imagination and enthusiasm. Further good features of lessons are the expressive reading and leading of stories and poems, together with teachers' skilled questioning to ensure pupils understand text. Teaching of groups of pupils with special needs in literacy was very good overall. This, together with the effective work of well briefed support assistants enables such pupils to make very good progress in terms of their prior attainment and the targets in their individual education plans.

96. The subject has very strong leadership. Very good procedures are in place to monitor what pupils know and can do. These include regular assessment of pupils' performance in reading and writing, and individual targets being set for all pupils. To support teachers further with their assessment activities, annotated and levelled portfolios of pupils' work are now in place. In addition to reviewing planning and evaluating the quality of teaching, the co-ordinator has produced a thorough scheme of work that meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. End of year assessments are analysed well to determine how curriculum provision needs to be modified in order to raise standards.

MATHEMATICS

97. As pupils start school their numeracy skills are below those expected of other five year olds. By the age of seven pupils reached standards in the 2001 national tests which were average. This represents good achievement during the time they are in Years 1 and 2. However, the number of pupils reaching higher levels was well below that expected of all schools. Standards have begun to show an improvement in the number of pupils achieving the expected levels after a period of time when these had fallen.

98. Pupils aged eleven in the national tests in 2001 reached standards that were very poor when compared to schools both nationally and in a similar context. This reflects the very high number of pupils with special needs in the group that took the tests, and the high turnover in staff, but results were still too low. When compared to schools with similar backgrounds pupils reached standards that were still well below those attained by other schools. The number of pupils reaching the higher levels was very low when compared to all other schools. The achievement of this group of pupils was unsatisfactory. Standards have declined severely over the last two years but the evidence of the inspection indicates that this has been arrested and standards are likely to improve in 2002 national tests with current Year 6 pupils performing close to the national average. However, standards in mathematics are still a cause for concern.

99. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and make very good progress. The inspection found no evidence for any marked difference in the performance of boys and girls in mathematics and all groups are included in the numeracy work in the school.

100. By the age of seven pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the properties of two-dimensional shapes, use ICT skills to produce symmetrical patterns and can use addition and subtraction facts to solve a range of real life problems. Above average pupils work well with calculating sums of money, understand the concept of weight and the use of measurement, and show that they understand simple fractions. Pupils are encouraged to apply mental strategies to their numeracy work, thinking out sensible answers to problems and working basic calculations out in their heads. Pupils record their work in a range of appropriate ways, both formally with numbers and written sums, and informally with drawings and pictures. These help pupils to remember the work they have done and to review their knowledge and understanding.

101. Pupils at the age of eleven order numbers to two decimal places with confidence, use metric and imperial units of measure and can measure and draw angles with a fair degree of accuracy. The satisfactory use of the numeracy strategy has had an impact on the ability of

pupils to work out problems in their heads using both addition and subtraction well and applying a satisfactory understanding of times tables to these calculations. The ability to do division sums in this way is not so well developed. Above average pupils work well on extending their abilities to identify shapes and draw angles with accuracy. They have a satisfactory understanding of percentages and fractions, basic ratios and the application of probability in everyday problems. Again, pupils use good mental strategies in their calculations and these impact on the accuracy of the answers they suggest. Pupils use a variety of standard written methods for recording their work. Unfortunately, pupils' skills are rarely consolidated, as the time given for pupils to work in lessons is too short. This means that the skills, observed in pupils' work and in the classroom, are not always thoroughly learned and pupils cannot put them into practice the next time they come across a similar problem.

102. The quality of teaching in all mathematics lessons but one was at least satisfactory. In Years 5 and 6 teaching was good and sometimes very good. This is due to the strength in planning that has emerged from tackling the poor standards in the school, the management of pupils and the very good support for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers are familiar with the structure of the numeracy strategy and usually apply this to their teaching well. The oral and mental sessions are delivered with enthusiasm and pupils are encouraged to respond to this. Teachers identify what has to be taught clearly and tell pupils what they are expected to learn during each lesson. The use of the plenary in this school is very effective and is used very well to bring pupils back together and reinforce the key ideas that have been learned. In the best lessons it is used to assess the progress of groups of pupils and to inform what the teacher will do next. Teachers use mathematical vocabulary well and this is included in planning so that all pupils and staff are able to explain ideas and processes well. High quality teaching was seen where teachers:

- Shared clear learning objectives with pupils, referred to previous lessons and showed where the learning fitted into the topic;
- Planned tasks to challenge the range of levels of ability in one class;
- Encouraged pupils to take risks with their learning and support and share in the excitement of learning new ideas;
- Revised previous key concepts and assessed the level of pupil knowledge and understanding so that it informed the way that they would teach the lesson;
- Used ICT well to extend ideas and skills.

103. Teaching is less than satisfactory where teachers do not assess pupils' abilities well, provide too little time to consolidate learning and prepare work which does not challenge or inspire pupils to achieve their best, or alternately provides work which is too difficult for the majority of pupils. For example, in a Year 3 lesson on strategies for counting large numbers of objects and recognising patterns and sequences, pupils were inappropriately challenged, did not have enough time to practise the main activity and learning was unsatisfactory. This resulted in pupils losing interest and behaviour deteriorating.

104. The attitudes of pupils to mathematics are usually good. Pupils are confident in presenting strategies and listen well to their classmates. Behaviour for a minority of pupils is a challenge but this is usually well handled by the very good team of support staff and rarely impacts on the learning of the rest of the class. Numeracy lessons make a useful contribution to pupils' social and moral development where pupils share ideas and work co-operatively. Pupils grow spiritually when they reflect on the idea of infinitely recurring numbers.

105. Assessment is satisfactory in that it is a feature of the teaching in the school, but the information is insufficiently used to identify and target pupils who could do better and who need to be challenged to achieve higher standards. This links to an issue with the attainment of pupils who should reach these higher levels. Teachers' planning does not pay sufficient

attention to the levels of challenge for more able pupils and teachers are not sufficiently aware of the work that needs to be done if pupils are to extend their learning. This has a negative impact on the standards that the school achieves.

106. The leadership of mathematics is now satisfactory following considerable support from the local education authority adviser. The school has recognised and has begun to tackle the problems with standards. The role of the co-ordinator is being strengthened. There has been considerable support, and training for staff has been put into place. The school has now appropriately identified the priorities that it has for mathematics and has an appropriate development plan for the improvement of teaching, standards and resources.

107. Areas for further development are in:

- Making better use of assessment information;
- Ensuring pupils have sufficient time to practise mathematical skills;
- Challenging all pupils appropriately and raising expectations to encourage higher attainers to achieve above average levels

108. Overall there are adequate resources to teach mathematics. However, particularly in Years 1 and 2 when mathematics lessons are timetabled simultaneously there is often insufficient practical apparatus to go round.

SCIENCE

109. Although over 80 per cent of pupils in Year 6 in 2001, attained standards in the National Curriculum tests which were in line with those expected for their age, this was well below the national average for all schools and below the average for schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Standards have remained at this level for the last four years, whilst standards nationally have risen year on year. Current work seen in school during the inspection indicates that whilst a significant number of pupils are working at the level expected for their age, there are too few pupils working at a higher level. At the inspection in 1997, a similar judgement was reached, although very little science was seen, due to the way the school organised its science work within topics. In the interim period there has been a large turnover of staff, especially in Years 3 to 6, during which time the school did not pay sufficient attention to analysing its results, tackling weaknesses in teaching and learning, or raising the expectations of teachers.

110. By the end of Year 2, teachers, carrying out assessments, judge that pupils' standards are above average for their age. This would suggest a slight rise in standards since the last inspection. However, during the current inspection, standards seen in lessons show that they are broadly in line with expectations for their age. No evidence was seen of standards higher than this, giving rise to an issue of whether class teachers have a clear enough understanding of the various levels of the National Curriculum.

111. The above information gives support to the inspection findings that higher attaining pupils are not being challenged sufficiently and are underachieving in comparison to the standards they should achieve. In most lessons seen, pupils with special needs and other pupils who were obtaining below average standards, often received good support from either learning support staff or from the class teacher. However, higher attaining pupils were seldom given additional tasks which extended their knowledge and understanding of science. Their 'extension' tasks too often centred on writing or drawing activities which may have extended skills in these areas but not in science.

112. Part of the problem lies in the lack of assessment to identify higher achieving pupils, together with planning which fails to show the levels of work currently being undertaken. As a result, details of what the next step forward might be, closely related to the levels indicated

within the National Curriculum, are missing. Teachers' expectations are therefore too firmly fixed on average results and do not search to challenge more able pupils through specifically planned challenging activities. In effect, this does mean that the teaching of science is not as fully inclusive as it might be, with a small, but significant percentage of pupils failing to have their needs met fully.

113. Pupils in Year 1 can describe features of materials and know that vertebrates have skeletons, while invertebrates often have shells or protective covering. At another time pupils visited the park to see play equipment, which used pushing and pulling forces. Year 2 pupils understand how plants grow from seeds; they can chart the growth of their hyacinths and can label the main parts of the plant. Previously completed work shows that they understand life cycles of frogs and butterflies. In addition they can sort food into dairy, fruit and meat, whilst recognising that exercise has a positive effect on their bodies.

114. In Year 3, pupils investigate the properties of magnets and can test objects using a force meter. In Year 4, they begin to understand differences between liquids, solids and gases. They understand how to filter solids from a solution and the difference between evaporation and condensation. By the time they have reached Year 5 pupils are investigating sound and musical instruments, labelling accurately a diagram of the ear and beginning to understand the way the earth, sun and moon operate in the world of planets and stars.

115. In Year 6, pupils carry out further investigations on dissolving, carrying out fair tests to establish what affects the rate of dissolution. They begin to experiment with electricity, but work in this area of science is weaker than the rest. Rather stronger is the way pupils carry out investigations. There are many examples of investigations being carried out carefully, pupils making sound use of equipment and of them recording their findings accurately. A clearer writing frame in which to record their investigations, giving less support to older and higher attaining pupils, would better support the development of their literacy skills.

116. A notable omission in the work seen in science is the lack of use made of information and communication technology. The lack of computers within class bases, does not give support to pupils using databases, making spreadsheets, or carrying out research on the Internet, in connection with their science work.

117. Overall, teaching of science is satisfactory. Of the eight lessons seen, three were good, four were satisfactory and one was unsatisfactory. Good features of the majority of lessons were the use of questioning to establish pupils' understanding, together with good examples of class management. Less successful in many lessons, was the level of work provided for the higher achieving pupils, and teachers' understanding of the exact levels of the work they were teaching. In a good lesson in Year 6, the teacher provided pupils with a range of toys so that they might establish the forces operating within them. Good discussion followed and the teacher probed pupils' understanding in order to establish how much they knew. She gave them opportunities to work in groups and prepare for a following lesson in which they could investigate an aspect of measuring force using a Newton meter. Learning was successful due to the teacher being able to motivate the pupils well. They in turn responded well, behaved well and most pupils made good progress.

118. The new co-ordinator has only just begun to examine the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and for the first time has had the benefit of looking at data on the National Curriculum test results, which have been available nationally for several years. There still remains much for her to do, when science becomes a focus in the school development plan: notably to:

- Revise the very old subject policy;
- Raise standards, through better challenge, for higher attaining pupils;

- Support the staff in gaining a better understanding of the levels of the National Curriculum, in order that their planning might be more specific and their own expectations raised;
- Create a set of assessments, which will not only show what pupils know and understand, but which will allow their progress to be tracked across the school, and realistic targets to be set for them;
- Consider further whole school development of writing within the subject in order to support the school's drive to improve literacy skills.

ART AND DESIGN

119. The last inspection reported attainment at the end of Year 2 to be above national expectations, and in line with expected levels at Year 6. Inspection evidence based on lesson observations, review of pupils' work, and displays around the school confirms that by the ages seven and eleven, pupils' attainment meets the levels expected nationally for their age. Review of teachers' planning indicates all requirements of the National Curriculum are met.

120. All pupils are introduced to a satisfactory range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional experiences, and they draw, paint and model with growing confidence. Observational drawing is developed soundly, and makes a positive contribution to other subjects, notably science and history. Pupils in Year 2 were observed making noteworthy sketches of shells, stones and flowers. They improved their initial sketches by using pencil to add shading, and pastels to give tone. In so doing, several pupils successfully captured the texture of the objects they drew. As part of their work on 'Mother Nature – Designer', pupils made detailed sketches of cross sections of a range of fruit, together with well worked pastel representations of hyacinths. Having collected and studied a wide variety of containers, pupils in Year 5 each arranged and drew a group of containers to develop their understanding of proportions and perspective. The theme 'People in action' resulted in Year 6 showing satisfactory skills as they studied and sketched their friends as they undertook a range of activities. The school is now developing the use of sketchbooks throughout. In several classes they are used well for initial sketches, and have become reference books for pupils' work with pattern, shade and tone. The use of these notebooks is an area for further development.

121. Pupils experiment, and learn to mix paint and pastels to obtain new colours and shades. They print with a wide range of objects. Older pupils, as in Year 4, make complex printing blocks which they use with success. Pupils learn about, and appreciate the work of, artists including Van Gogh and Monet, and successfully work in their style. Having studied compositions by Matisse, pupils in Year 5 produced effective paper collages and used computer technology to create designs in his fashion.

122. Pupils in Year 3 considered how they could enhance the open spaces of a park in the town. They successfully designed and made models of abstract sculptures. The finished works are aesthetically pleasing, well mounted, and a credit to their young designers. Although no textile work was observed during the inspection, planning indicates it to be carried out at other times during the school year. Although the subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual and social development, experiences and appreciation of art from cultures other than Western European is too limited. However, photographic evidence shows the school to have held an 'Arts Day', during which African artists worked with pupils using a range of media.

123. There is clear evidence that pupils are enthusiastic about art, and work well by themselves or in a group. Pupils demonstrate growing initiative in selecting equipment from a suitably wide range of resources and in their ability to evaluate sensibly the work of others. For example, having completed their sketches, pupils in Year 2 walked around their class to observe and comment on the work of their friends. In Year 6, pupils gave well considered

views concerning the work of the several Impressionist artists they had studied. In lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory. Teachers were secure in their subject knowledge, ably demonstrating and clearly explaining techniques.

124. The recently introduced style of management, whereby art, along with three other subjects is co-ordinated by a team of teachers, has yet to make an impact on standards. Although the planned activities for each year group are drawn from national guidance documents, these have yet to be refined into a 'school specific' scheme of work that includes assessment opportunities. The quality of teaching in art has not been sufficiently monitored to assess strengths and weaknesses, or to determine whether aspects of the curriculum need to be modified in order to raise pupils' levels of attainment.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

125. Standards in design and technology at the end of Year 6 are average. This was the position at the last inspection. No lessons were seen in Years 1 and 2 and only a small amount of pupils' previously completed work was in evidence around the school. However, work seen on display, together with details of planning, show that all elements of the National Curriculum are planned for and completed work is broadly in line with expectations.

126. Pupils in Year 1 visited a local playground, looked at play equipment and discussed what they might like in their own playground. They drew the equipment, listed materials they would use in making models of the equipment and finally evaluated their completed models, saying what they liked and what they did not like about their finished products. This formed good links with the art and design curriculum.

127. In a lesson in Year 3, pupils were learning of the importance of stability within structures. The class teacher provided a range of products showing both stable and unstable bases and drew from these examples the basic idea of a strong triangular base giving structures strength. Pupils then examined picture frames in order to see how they were made and how many of them used a triangular base to keep the frame upright. Planning showed that the pupils would go on to use some of these ideas in designing and making their own frames. Photographic evidence from a previous year shows that this exercise was successful.

128. The oldest pupils in Year 6 had previously examined a range of slippers in order to understand how they were made and to draw conclusions about the features they might introduce to the slippers they were to make. They looked at the function of the slippers, how they appeared, safety issues and cost of the finished product. Sketches were made and the finished products showed good finish and matched the design brief. Pupils then evaluated their finished slippers noting what problems were encountered in the making process, how they might improve their slippers in future, and if they met the design brief.

129. Teaching, in the two lessons seen, was satisfactory. Teachers were well prepared, had a range of artefacts to share with pupils and they understood the subject well. They were therefore able to engage pupils successfully in the tasks, keeping them motivated through clear explanations. For some pupils, the technical vocabulary made understanding more difficult and words such as centre of gravity, triangulation, stable and unstable deserved more explanation and discussion. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates in making things, but need more support with the writing element of the subject.

130. Resources have been improved since the last inspection, when they were noted as unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection, the co-ordination of the subject is now managed by a small team of teachers, who at the same time have responsibility for art, music and

physical education throughout the school. They have yet to draw up an effective action plan, looking closely at design and technology, where they will need to examine:

- The further use of literacy skills within pupils' evaluation and written plans;
- The use of information and communication technology as a means to design;
- The revision of the policy for the subject, which is currently very much out of date;
- The drawing up of an efficient form of assessment for the work.

GEOGRAPHY

131. Standards in geography are in line with national expectations and this matches the judgement at the last inspection. At the age of seven pupils have learned about their local environment. They explore the local traffic conditions and suggest ideas for improving the environment around the school, making it safer for pupils to walk to school. Pupils use atlases to find information and understand that maps can give different information when they look at the climate in areas where they would like to go on holiday. They can describe features in the landscape but are unsure if these are physical or of human origin, and do not question geographical reasons for the places people live.

132. By the age of eleven, pupils are able to ask simple key geographical questions and compare different localities when they study coastlines. They understand the use of simple maps and are able to discuss grid references to locate a position on a map. They understand the impact of human events on the local environment when they study the waste that the school produces. When pupils in Year 4 investigate local land use and the jobs parents do, they show good geographical skills and recognise environmental changes. However, pupils do not have a good understanding of wider geographical issues across the world. They are given insufficient opportunity to practise key skills such as using geographical evidence and investigating topical issues.

133. The teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory in that it was clearly planned and the key learning objectives were clearly shared. In the better lessons, effective teaching enables pupils to engage actively in exploring their environment and making clear statements of their impact on it. Good teaching encouraged pupils to discuss their findings and to develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject. However, teachers' assessment of pupils and the unsatisfactory resource bank, mean that lessons do not always deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding of geography. Teachers are not clear of the levels expected of pupils and this means that lessons are not planned to build on previous work and skills. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very positive. The very good support of classroom assistants enables all pupils to be suitably included in lessons. There is no difference in the achievement of boys or girls.

134. There is a team approach to the subject management of geography and it is fortunate that the member of staff who acts as spokesman for geography is suitably qualified to lead the subject area. The school is well aware of the need to develop management and its plans have the potential to improve the subject area. However, the unresolved issues of unsatisfactory resources, limited assessment and lack of staff development, currently have negative impacts on pupils' attainment.

HISTORY

135. Only a very small amount of history teaching could be observed during the inspection. An inspection of the work pupils produce in their books and on display, indicates that standards are just in line with national expectations. This is the same as the last time the school was inspected. However, the school is giving insufficient time to the teaching of history and this means that pupils are not being given the opportunity of developing their historical knowledge and understanding sufficiently.

136. At the age of seven pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the past from stories. Pupils recognise from artefacts that peoples' lives were different from their own. This is seen where pupils aged six handled objects with care and tried to find out their use by recording the shape of the object and what it was made from. Pupils have not yet developed a sense of chronology outside their immediate lives, finding it difficult to place objects from 100 years ago with reference to their own families.

137. At the age of eleven pupils are able to talk with satisfactory understanding of the way that national events in the past affected the lives of people, and have a growing sense of chronology across larger periods of time. Pupils present information satisfactorily, selecting and organising ideas to tell what Yeovil was like during World War II. Pupils use evidence well to explore the idea of rationing and are able to reflect on the impact it would have on them. The use of primary source materials greatly enhances pupils' responses and the good outcomes show how carefully pupils have thought about the events and effects on the people involved. Pupils are less aware of why periods of time are different to today, in the way that people's beliefs, attitudes and ideas have changed over time, and are not yet aware that historical 'fact' is often open to interpretation.

138. While the number of lessons seen during the inspection was very small, the very high quality of these lessons should be noted: for example one Year 6 lesson was excellent. The focus on key historical skill and the use of first hand evidence allowed pupils to make very good improvements in their knowledge and understanding of the past. Teachers use careful and challenging questioning to make pupils think carefully about these ideas and they direct questions skillfully to ensure that all pupils are included in the lesson. The planning of the lessons seen was very good and the pupils recorded the outcomes well. An inspection of the work in books and on display in the school however would indicate that this quality of teaching is not usual across the whole school. This means the quality of teaching can only be satisfactory.

139. Pupils clearly enjoy history and talk with enthusiasm about the things they know as well as the visits and visitors that the school organises to support the teaching of history. They behave well in the lessons observed and have very good attitudes to the subject.

140. The subject leadership lies within a team of staff who guide history and other subjects. This is a recent initiative and it has begun to develop ideas for the way that history could be improved in the future. The team is aware of the need to improve areas such as the low quality of resources; the school's policies for the subject; and the development of assessment strategies. However, little improvement in the standards the school achieves will be seen without an increase in the lesson time allocated to the teaching of history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

141. In the last report information technology standards were described as being "in line with national expectations". Since then such expectations, now referring to information and communication technology, have been significantly raised with the introduction of new curriculum guidance. The school is doing well in developing its provision to meet these requirements, with the result that standards are still consistent with national expectations for seven and eleven year olds. Given that the school has a high profile of special educational needs and that a significant proportion of pupils do not have access to computers at home, this represents a positive judgement. All pupils regardless of gender, background and ability have the same opportunities and are fully included in all ICT activities on offer.

142. Children in the reception year are introduced to the ICT suite through weekly timetabled sessions, learning to handle the computer, mouse and keyboard. They operate simple

programs: for example dragging items of clothing across the screen to 'dress teddy' and become familiar with equipment.

143. In Years 1 and 2 pupils continue to use the suite and refine their skills and awareness of the potential of ICT to enhance daily life. For example pupils explore how to word process, change fonts and colour, and obviously enjoy controlling processes. Year 2 pupils marvelled at the capability of the computer to produce instant mirror images of their own drawings as they outlined patterns on the screen. They responded very well to the teacher's introduction and whooped with delight when colour was painted into their designs. By the end of Year 2 pupils' understanding of the relationship between keyboard, monitor and printer is well established and all pupils can log on, load programs and save their work to file as is expected of this age group. Some higher attainers are able to develop their skills further: for example Year 1 pupils creating their own signs to illustrate the school rules contemplating how to produce banner-sized labels to attract attention.

144. By the end of Year 6 pupils have had opportunities to continue to develop their computer control skills, as well as experimenting with modelling techniques to explore hypotheses and make modifications. For example:

- In Year 3 pupils' class multimedia presentations, connecting different elements together through a series of links, are good for eight year olds;
- Year 5 work to investigate alternative models for class furniture organisation, shows satisfactory skills and understanding for this age group;
- Standards of Year 6 work creating and evaluating programs to operate traffic lights in different sequences, and for different time periods, is above expectations.

145. Observation of lessons in all year groups confirms that pupils are making good progress throughout the school.

146. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to be introduced to the Internet and e-mail and all sites open to pupils are appropriately controlled. However this aspect and its potential to enhance pupils' independent research skills is as yet underdeveloped. The lack of opportunities to make use of facilities at lunchtime (unless it rains): for example through a 'computer club', is a disadvantage from this point of view.

147. Pupils in all classes are keen, interested and show considerable respect for equipment and resources. They work well together, are ready to listen to advice, and behave well in ICT lessons.

148. ICT teaching in the suite is consistently good. Pupils learn well because staff are well prepared, use good questioning and tour effectively to give group and individual support. Teachers make very good use of the new interactive smart board and projector and set a good example in their use of ICT. Staff have benefited from on going in-service training to update their skills, knowledge and understanding, which are now considered sound. The contribution of learning support staff, especially the excellent ICT technician, has a positive effect on what pupils learn. Most lessons move with good pace, although sometimes introductions are too long, with pupils eager to make the most of suite time.

149. Considerable improvements to resources over the last year with new PCs throughout the suite and additions such as the digital camera, are having very positive effects on pupils' achievements. Good use is made of older machines to create a small suite in a shared Year 2 base, but in general there are insufficient resources available in classrooms and as a result there is too little evidence of ICT being used as a tool to support other subjects. Notable exceptions to this are in Year 3 data handling for graphs and pie charts produced on the

computer to illustrate work on local geography; and Year 5 digital photographs to record class activities.

150. ICT is used very well to support special educational needs work, but the age and quality of equipment available in this area is approaching the point where it will be unsatisfactory and is in need of updating.

151. The subject has benefited from considerable emphasis in the school improvement plan and the involvement of head, deputy and technician to ensure its continued development until a permanent co-ordinator can be appointed. The temporary co-ordinator makes a sound contribution. Areas for further development include:

- Adapting the national guidance for ICT into a school specific scheme of work;
- Introducing assessment and record keeping systems to track what individual pupils can do, know and understand;
- Ensuring better temperature control in the ICT suite to prevent overheating both of equipment and those working there.

MUSIC

152. Standards in music have not been maintained since the previous inspection and although they meet expectations in Years 1 and 2, they are below those expected by the end of Year 6. There has been insufficient attention given to music since the previous inspection and, coupled with insufficient monitoring of teaching and of pupils' performance, standards have been allowed to slide. Many teachers lack the necessary subject knowledge and expertise to teach the subject and have low expectations as a result. There have been considerable changes in teachers since the previous inspection and in those classes where the teacher has some expertise, standards are slowly improving again. However, this is too slow to improve standards to expected levels. Assessment procedures do not guide planning sufficiently well so that activities are not matched well enough to pupils' ability. Consequently pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 do not achieve as well as they should.

153. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 sing well. They sing in tune and with good volume. All words can be clearly heard due to clear diction. Older pupils show less enthusiasm and need a lot of encouragement to take part during assemblies and hymn practice, leaving younger more enthusiastic pupils to carry the singing. The quality of singing is unsatisfactory in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6, pupils do not enjoy the activity and do not commit themselves to singing with confidence. Pupils talk about singing in singing practice but there are few other occasions when they sing regularly. They have a limited repertoire of songs although they do recall singing rounds and partner songs.

154. All aspects of the curriculum are covered and this is an improvement since the previous inspection, which reported that there were too few opportunities for pupils to compose their own musical pieces. Pupils in Year 3 composed simple percussion accompaniments to the song they were learning and could keep each part going with little support from the teacher. A tape was used effectively to keep the beat going but the quality was not good enough to lift pupils' singing. Suitable opportunities to evaluate the quality of their performance are given and pupils' ideas are built upon well during some lessons. For example, pupils in Year 6 evaluated the whispered chants added as an accompaniment to the performance of a new song they were learning. The quality of performance improved as a consequence, and the words used and the way they were whispered, matched the mood of the song.

155. Pupils' listening skills are developed particularly well in lessons. Pupils in Year 5 talked confidently about the mood created in particular pieces of music and due to the teacher's focused questions, are beginning to use musical vocabulary in their explanations. However,

they are not yet relating the mood created to the musical skill used by the composer. The same teacher used music effectively in a literacy lesson to set the mood and act as a stimulus for pupils writing 'spooky sentences'. The subsequent sentences used vivid and expressive language partly as a result and contributed well to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils in Year 4 can name the instrument playing a particular piece of music with some confidence. Pupils in Year 6 have limited knowledge of composers and are unable to name any pieces they have listened to recently. This reflects the lack of focus over the last few years given to music. There are missed opportunities for pupils to learn about a range of musical styles and different composers. Although music is playing as pupils enter and leave the hall before and after assembly, little reference is made to this music and as a consequence some pupils prefer to talk to each other rather than listen to the music.

156. Although the quality of teaching observed was satisfactory, there are weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge and expertise, and this prevents the extension of some activities to allow those who are able to achieve higher than expected levels. Planning outlines exactly what pupils are to do in lessons, but often the organisation of the activities means that they are completed too slowly and not extended well enough for pupils to learn beyond a low level. Therefore although pupils learn the difference between long and short notes, they are not able to develop the knowledge and skills beyond the simple circle game, because it is not planned to do so. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to choose the instruments they need as tasks are directed too much by teachers and instruments are given out. Due to earlier lessons taking longer than planned, lessons are sometimes too short and this does not give pupils enough time to build on previous learning sufficiently well. Due to weaknesses in monitoring, this has not been picked up and therefore is not being addressed. There are insufficient assessment procedures and this does not help teachers' planning sufficiently well. Teachers do not have a clear understanding of the levels of attainment as set out in the National Curriculum and coupled with low expectations are not matching work at high enough levels for pupils to achieve as well as they should.

157. The co-ordination of music is unsatisfactory. There is a very new subject team who are only just beginning to get to grips with the development needs for the subject. The subject is due for review shortly and the school has recognised the need to develop a suitable action plan for improvement. Recorder club and orchestra provide suitable opportunities for those pupils who wish to learn to play an instrument. The recorder group enjoy playing at the beginning of some assemblies and leading singing. They play with good tone and can read familiar music. Although the number of musical instruments is adequate the quality of some of these is poor. However, these are used effectively to support learning in the subject. There are not enough instruments from other countries to support the range of musical styles in the curriculum. Although there is adequate software for ICT to support learning in music, this is not yet used sufficiently well.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

158. Since the last report national initiatives such as those for literacy and numeracy have effectively reduced the amount of time available for physical education at this school. As a result it is a positive feature that standards are consistent with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. In the case of eleven year olds this is not as high as the judgement made in the last inspection when the subject was described as a 'strength of the school'. Pupils do have opportunities to undertake all elements required by the National Curriculum including gymnastics, dance, games and, for junior pupils, swimming. Opportunities for more adventurous pursuits such as orienteering and rock climbing are provided for older pupils, partly through residential trip weeks. All pupils are fully included in all school based activities. Pupils continue to be successful in matches and tournaments with other schools.

159. By the end of Year 2 pupils have a satisfactory awareness of body and space. They know that exercise is healthy and are beginning to understand some of the changes which

take place in their bodies during physical activity. In a Year 2 indoor games lesson pupils made good progress learning about tactics and evaluating the effectiveness of skills to identify how improvements in throwing and defending could be made. The quality of teaching in lessons and parts of lessons, observed between Year R and Year 2 was sound with good features in relationships and good questioning to make pupils reflect on levels of success.

160. Pupils at the age of eleven have consolidated the skills previously learnt and show good understanding of the need for rules in a variety of games situations. This is confirmed and promoted through the good range of extracurricular activities on offer which includes amongst others; football, netball, basketball, rounders, athletics, line and country dancing. Pupils learn how to create their own sequences in gymnastics and dance, and demonstrate that they can move apparatus safely. Observation of both lessons and clubs, as well as playtime activities, shows that pupils can throw and catch at expected levels, and are mostly eager and competitive. By report of the school, parents and pupils, it is clear that nearly all pupils can swim the required 25 metres before they leave and that the swimming programme is well organised.

161. On most occasions observed the majority of pupils responded well and took part with enthusiasm. However in each class at least three pupils had not brought their kit and this presented problems for the teacher. In the best lessons these pupils were given set observation tasks and were drawn into the discussions about skills. On some occasions such pupils had too little to do. In all cases the behaviour and effort of pupils was directly related to the quality of teaching. Some lessons were of good quality, but several, notably, but not exclusively, in Years 3 and 4, showed gaps in teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to teach the subject. These resulted in pupils, especially the more able, being insufficiently challenged, lessons of slow pace, and technical discrepancies such as no (or inappropriate) warm up or cool down activities. In these lessons pupils' behaviour was sometimes not good enough.

162. Physical education is co-ordinated by a management team of five people. This initiative has recently been established and has the potential to strengthen the consistency of provision across the school. However, in addition this team has responsibility for art, design and technology, and music as well as physical education. As yet some issues in the subject remain unresolved with some negative effects on pupils' learning:

- The scheme of work is not up to date and was written by a teacher who has left the school, and can no longer support staff who are unsure of their subject expertise;
- There is no systematic form of assessment or record keeping of individual pupils' achievement in physical education. This makes it hard to set targets and gauge progress and means that if a teacher leaves, some of the knowledge of pupils' performance is lost;
- The quality of teaching has not been sufficiently monitored to assess strengths and potential weakness either of particular teaching or the planned curriculum.

Improving the management of the subject from these points of view needs to be a focus of school improvement planning, scheduled for summer term 2002.

163. Overall there are good resources for the teaching of physical education and the site offers good opportunities for a range of activities. The exception to this being, the lack outdoor equipment and defined space which can be used to encourage and promote physical activities for those children in the Foundation Stage. The limited size of the hall and its supporting columns raised some concerns about health and safety in physical education lessons.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

164. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in the provision for religious education. The quality of teaching has deteriorated in Years 3, 4 and 5 and pupils have too little opportunity to develop a knowledge and understanding of different faiths. This means that pupils' insight into the values and beliefs of others is unsatisfactory. Assessment procedures remain unsatisfactory. Teachers are unaware of the levels that pupils are required to achieve in order to attain expected standards and therefore expectations are too low to allow pupils to learn as well as they should. By the end of Year 6 pupils do not attain expected levels in religious education and are not achieving as well as they should.

165. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have a satisfactory knowledge of Christianity. Through taking part in the annual nativity play, pupils have a good knowledge of the story about the birth of Jesus. Many can recall the significant details of this story. Scrutiny of work reveals that this knowledge is extended through studying the life of Jesus as an adult and his subsequent crucifixion through the work about Easter. Pupils are given suitable opportunities to consider the part that they play in moulding their world. They consider their own feelings and those of others through discussion and drama activities. Pupils talk about different family groups with thought to the feelings of those who may have lost a family member, evident when one pupil talked about a family pet dying recently.

166. The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. Lessons are mostly practical and this holds pupils' attention. During one lesson pupils acted out the story of Jesus visiting the temple and this helped them to understand the content of the story and the meaning behind it through the consideration of Mary's feelings when she realised that she had left Jesus behind. Teachers deal sensitively with pupils' contributions and the strong relationships makes sure that everyone contributes to class discussions. There is little written recording due to the practical nature of the subject. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop their speaking and listening skills well during religious education lessons.

167. The quality of teaching in Years 3, 4, and 5 has been unsatisfactory and there has been too little opportunity for pupils to attain expected levels. Teachers have weak subject knowledge and low expectations. They do not know the scheme of work or attainment levels well enough to challenge pupils to achieve higher levels. They teach pupils facts about Muslim and Hindu faiths and although the title of the unit of work is 'What is it like to be a Hindu and a Muslim?' there is no opportunity in lessons for pupils to consider or reflect upon this in any depth. Lessons are not practical enough and therefore pupils soon lose interest. Too much use is made of worksheets that require pupils to put in the missing word and much other work is copied. Teachers' marking is unsatisfactory and does not give pupils enough guidance on what they need to do next to improve. Comments do not relate to pupils' learning but refer to presentation.

168. The teaching in Year 6 is good. Pupils have very good opportunities to consider the more difficult questions of life and discuss openly the way they feel about certain issues. In a very good lesson, pupils listened intently to the teacher's true tale, asking pertinent questions and reflecting on how they would feel in the same situation. They subsequently were encouraged to talk openly about the things that upset them. Pupils work very well together discussing issues and reflecting on causes of certain events, how these can be prevented and the consequences of our actions on others. This discussion gave pupils a real opportunity to consider carefully the impact of their actions on others and made a good contribution to their moral development. A missed opportunity to relate the comments to how people's beliefs influenced behaviour in similar situations was lost, although planning indicates that this will be addressed later in the term. However, there is too little time for pupils to catch up lost ground in their knowledge and understanding of different faiths. Talking to Year 6 pupils revealed that although they have a good understanding of moral issues and a good insight into their own feelings and those of others, they cannot recall any significant facts about the Muslim or Hindu faiths beyond the recall of the story of Rama and

Sita which they recall learning in Year 3. This demonstrates unsatisfactory learning in this aspect of religious education.

169. Subject co-ordination is currently unsatisfactory due to the lack of monitoring of pupils' learning. There are suitable arrangements to make sure that the locally agreed syllabus is covered in the whole school curriculum plan. However because monitoring procedures are poor, pupils do not receive broad and balanced experiences. Planned provision for the use of ICT is unsatisfactory. There is currently no action plan for the subject so suitable priorities for improvements have not been identified. There are plans for an interim subject review in September and a full review next spring. Due to weaknesses in opportunities to learn about different faiths, there are missed opportunities for religious education to make a suitable contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.