

INSPECTION REPORT

ASHINGTON CENTRAL FIRST SCHOOL

Ashington, Northumberland

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 131021

Headteacher: Mr M V Spencer

Reporting inspector: Dr Richard Perkin
14591

Dates of inspection: 25 – 28 February 2002

Inspection number: 243123

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First school
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Milburn Road Ashington Northumberland
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sylvia Smith
Date of previous inspection:	29 September 1997

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14591	Richard Perkin	Registered inspector	Foundation stage Science Design and technology	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19446	Susan Wood	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 and carers?
2607	Brian Griffiths	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
10269	David Figures	Team inspector	English Art and design Music	How well are pupils taught?
8420	Valerie Roberts	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language Geography History Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ashington Central is a larger than average First School catering for pupils aged from three to nine. There are 370 pupils on role in addition to 99 children attending part-time in the nursery. Although there are similar proportions of boys and girls, some year groups have a marked gender imbalance. Most pupils are white, of United Kingdom heritage. There are three pupils of Indian origin for whom English is an additional language and two other pupils who are bilingual in Spanish and English. Five Traveller pupils receive extra support. While about 33 per cent of pupils receive free school meals, a further 40 per cent of pupils bring sandwiches. The school is part of an Education Achievement Zone of 21 Ashington schools, characterised by low standards of achievement and high levels of social deprivation; it is in an area of high unemployment. Children arrive in the nursery with levels of attainment which are well below average in personal, social and mathematical development and in language and literacy, where they are particularly low in spoken communication. Girls arrive in nursery achieving more highly than boys in all areas. One hundred and seven pupils are on the register of special educational needs, 33 of them for emotional or behavioural development needs. At 29 per cent, this is above the national average. Five pupils have statements of special educational need, broadly in line with the national average. Many pupils leave or join the school at other than the usual times; over ten per cent of the pupils attending the school were admitted in this way during the past twelve months. The school has recently had many changes in teaching staff and much staff absence. At the time of the inspection, a new headteacher had been in post for six weeks, supported by an acting deputy head, an acting special educational needs co-ordinator and an acting infant phase manager. There were two supply teachers and two teachers on short-term temporary contracts.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This school is rapidly improving under the very effective leadership of a new headteacher. After an unsettled period, there is a strong commitment from governors and key staff to improve their present under-developed roles. The situation is being managed well and this places the school in a very strong position to maintain its progress. Pupils achieve very well from a low start to reach standards in most subjects that are appropriate for their age, in response to teaching that is satisfactory overall but is often good. Because this is achieved at a slightly higher than average cost per child, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils' achievement is good in mathematics, science, information and communication technology, design technology, geography, music and physical education
- Pupils make very good progress and reach above average standards in art and design
- There is an outstanding nursery that provides children with an excellent start to school and in which they achieve well
- Pupils with special educational needs, including those with emotional and behavioural problems, make good progress because of the effective support they receive
- Very good leadership is developing a very positive shared commitment to improvement
- The good accommodation is used well

What could be improved

- Standards in writing and speaking and listening
- The school lacks a consistent approach to teaching and learning; monitoring and evaluation; behaviour management; assessment and its use in planning
- The role of the governors
- The quality of information provided to parents about the work their children do and the progress they make

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good. The results of national tests for seven-year-olds in 2001 were better in both reading and writing and much better in mathematics than in 1997. However, the inspection judgement in 1997 was that standards were higher than the test results showed. Present standards in reading, mathematics and science have improved after a dip in 1998 and are now at the levels seen at the last inspection. Standards in writing have not yet reached the levels seen then. Standards have improved in art and information and communication technology and have significantly improved in design and technology. Nursery provision has improved from good to excellent. The library has significantly improved. There is now an effective structured curriculum in design and technology and information and communication technology. Many policies and schemes of work have been developed and there is a satisfactory broad and balanced curriculum. Assessment procedures in English and mathematics have improved and are now good. The role of co-ordinators has been developed for English, mathematics and science but remains under-developed in other subjects.

Hindrances to progress have included long and short term staff absences and subsequent problems in finding quality supply staff and high staff turnover. Under a new leader, the school is very well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	E	E	D	B
Writing	E	E	D	B
Mathematics	E*	D	C	A

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Results in national tests in reading and writing for seven-year-olds in 2001 were below the national average but above the average for schools with similar free school meals. In mathematics, the results were in line with the national average and well above those for similar schools. The results of optional tests for nine-year-olds in 2001 in English and mathematics were well below average because of the strongly disrupted learning experience that these pupils received. Other tests in mathematics showed attainment to be much closer to the norm for their age.

Children achieve well during their time in the foundation stage of education but are not on course to reach the early learning goals by the time they begin Year 1, particularly in communication, language and literacy. By the time they are seven, pupils' attainment in reading, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, design and technology and geography is at expected levels for their age and in art, their attainment is above average. In writing, speaking and listening and in religious education, history and physical education, pupils' attainment is below average. By the time they are nine, pupils are on target to reach average standards in reading, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, design and technology, geography, music and physical education and above average standards in art. Their attainment is still below average in writing, speaking and listening, history and religious education. Pupils achieve very well in art and well in mathematics, science, information and communication technology, design and technology, geography, music and physical education. Their achievement in English, history and religious education is satisfactory, although more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The disparity between the achievement of boys and girls in English, particularly in writing, is greater than usual. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language and Traveller pupils make steady progress. The school is well on the way to meeting its targets in reading and mathematics and is on track to meet the less challenging target for writing.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Pupils are keen to come to school but some find it difficult to maintain their interest in activities for long.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory overall and good where teaching is interesting and well-focused. Pupils are noisy when moving around the school and sometimes in classrooms and assemblies. Play in the yard is sometimes boisterous.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Pupils are pleased to take on responsibilities. Some pupils do not understand the impact of their actions on others and there is evidence of some name-calling, which is being effectively addressed.
Attendance	The school's attendance rates are unsatisfactory and punctuality is a problem.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	good	satisfactory	satisfactory

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

Excellent teaching in the nursery and sound teaching in all other year groups ensures that pupils achieve very well during their time in the school. They make particularly good progress in the nursery, where they quickly acquire relevant skills. The teaching of English, including literacy, and mathematics, including numeracy, is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language together with Traveller children benefit from the teaching but the higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged and make less progress than they should. The quality of teaching is, however, inconsistent, so that, although there are examples of very good and excellent practice, in one lesson in ten, unsatisfactory lesson planning or ineffective management of pupils' behaviour results in the pupils working at too slow a pace and producing too little work. Where classroom assistants work with targeted pupils and groups, the pupils make good progress but in whole-class sessions, the adults' skills are often not effectively used. Pupils respond satisfactorily to the teaching they experience and acquire knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate, given their low starting point.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory – meets statutory requirements. The nursery curriculum is very rich and stimulating; in the reception year, it is of good quality. The infant and junior curriculum is of satisfactory quality although the literacy strategy is taught inconsistently. Throughout the school, opportunities are made to enrich learning through educational visits and visiting experts. A once interesting range of out-of-school activities is not at present in place.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils, including those with statements, receive effective support from well trained and expert support staff and, where necessary, from outside agencies.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Teachers and classroom assistants are aware of the needs of these pupils and provide for them soundly.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Sound overall. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is properly provided for; provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory because there is too little emphasis on it in assemblies and classrooms.
How well the school cares	Satisfactory. The school provides a safe and secure learning

for its pupils	environment that ensures the health, safety and general welfare of all its pupils. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance is sound. While assessment procedures are satisfactory, the information gained is not used sufficiently well to ensure that planning meets the needs of all the pupils. There are satisfactory systems for educational and personal support and guidance.
Partnership with parents	Parents are generally supportive of the work of the school. The information provided about pupils' progress and the work they do is not sufficiently informative or helpful to parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The very effective leadership of the headteacher is quickly beginning to unite the school after a period of considerable disruption and change. The transition between headteachers has been well supported by a hard-working acting deputy headteacher. Staff and governors are starting to work together to identify priorities for improving standards and the school's quality of education.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Unsatisfactory. Whilst the supportive governing body meets its statutory responsibilities, it does not play a full enough part in shaping the direction of the school or overseeing its academic performance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory, although the school is now well placed to extend the existing procedures for performance management. It is also beginning to improve the existing under-developed arrangements for subject and phase managers to monitor performance and provision in their subjects and areas of responsibility. It compares its results with other schools nationally and locally.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school relates its spending to its priorities and does its best to get the best value possible from its spending.
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	Staffing has been unsettled recently because of staff changes and staff absence. Learning resources are satisfactory and good for information and communication technology. Accommodation is good and is well used to promote pupils' learning. Playground space is limited.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best • The teaching is good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents do not feel well informed about their children's progress • The school does not work closely enough with parents • There are not enough activities outside lessons

The inspection confirms the parents' good opinions but agrees that parents are not well enough informed about their children's progress and that there are not enough activities outside of lessons. The school is establishing arrangements to work more closely with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 The attainment of children entering the nursery varies but overall is well below what is expected for their age, particularly in spoken language. They achieve well in the nursery and reception classes because of the good teaching but, by the time they begin Year 1, their attainment is still below average in personal and social development, language, literacy and communication, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and in creative and physical development. By the time they leave the school, however, pupils are achieving overall standards that are in line with expectations for their age in most subjects. Pupils with English as an additional language and Traveller children make sound progress because teachers know and provide for their needs soundly. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their needs are identified very early, work is adapted appropriately for them and they receive effective support. Pupils identified as having behavioural difficulties make good progress because of the consistent response to the behaviour targets set for them.
- 2 The results of national tests for seven-year-olds in 2001 showed that pupils' attainment in reading and writing was below the national average but above the average for pupils in similar schools. In mathematics, pupils attained expected levels and were well above average in comparison to similar schools. Trends were upwards in all three subjects and particularly marked in mathematics, where results have improved from being in the bottom five per cent nationally in 1999 to being average in 2001. Attainment in science was at expected levels and above average in comparison with similar schools. Higher attainers achieved well in comparison to higher attaining pupils in similar schools, particularly in mathematics. The achievement of boys in reading and writing is weaker than that of girls but not significantly more than nationally.
- 3 The results of optional tests for nine-year-olds in 2001 in English and mathematics were well below average because of the strongly disrupted learning experience that these pupils received. Other tests in mathematics showed attainment to be much closer to the norm for their age.
- 4 Since the last inspection, pupils' performance in most subjects has improved at a sound rate and, in information and communication technology and design and technology in particular, has improved at an even better rate. The inspection judgement is that standards of reading for the pupils now in Year 2 are broadly in line with the national average. Standards are below expected levels in writing and speaking and listening. Standards in reading for nine-year-olds are at expected levels for their age but their attainment in speaking and listening and writing remain below the level expected. Pupils' attainment in mathematics is at expected levels for both seven and nine-year-olds. Because of the sound teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy, many pupils achieve soundly and those with special educational needs make good progress. The teachers' levels of expectation for higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenging and they make less progress than they should in English. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects but planning for this is inconsistent and chances are sometimes missed. Standards in science are at expected levels for both seven and nine-year-olds. Standards in information and communication technology are in line with the national average for both seven and nine-year-olds; pupils benefit from the good resources for the subject and the expertise of support staff and teachers, though the relevant skills are not sufficiently

used to support learning in other subjects. Standards in religious education are below expected levels by seven and nine, largely because pupils' writing and speaking and listening skills are under-developed. Similar factors lead to standards in history being below average by seven and nine. By the time they leave the school, pupils' attainment in art is better than expected, to a large extent because the rich range of visits and visitors stimulates often exciting art work. In design and technology, geography, music and physical education, standards are at expected levels as pupils respond well to opportunities for practical work. The achievement of pupils in the infant and lower junior classes is better because they benefit more from the initiatives put in place by the school to improve standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 5 Pupils' attitudes to school are satisfactory. Pupils are keen to come to school although many find it difficult to focus their energies on learning and are often easily distracted by their peers. Pupils become interested and involved in the activities when teachers capture their imagination. In these lessons, they ask pertinent questions and listen to the views of other pupils. They settle to tasks and produce work of an acceptable quality, working sensibly and generally quietly, sustaining concentration whether they are working as individuals, in pairs or in a group. They clearly know what is expected of them and mostly try hard to please the teacher. When teaching is less stimulating, pupils become restless, distracted and talkative, the classroom becomes noisy and the pace of their learning slows. Pupils are sometimes intolerant of other pupils' mistakes or misunderstandings, though such intolerance is firmly and quickly dealt with by the teachers.
- 6 The behaviour of pupils in their classrooms and around the school is satisfactory. One pupil was excluded from school for a fixed term in the last academic year. Pupils with behavioural targets are guided carefully towards positive attitudes in the classroom. Where teaching is most effective, pupils' behaviour is very good. However, in a few lessons, a number of pupils consistently talk, fidget with resources or fuss around the teacher and teaching and learning are disrupted. For some classes, the frequent change of teachers means that pupils have no consistent classroom management practices to guide their behaviour. In the playgrounds, where space is limited, pupils are often boisterous in their play. However, there is little bullying and no racist or sexist behaviour was observed; the school deals quickly and effectively with the few incidents of oppressive behaviour that do occur. All pupils are well integrated into the life and activities of the school. Movement around the school is sometimes noisy and over-excited. When pupils enter assembly, they sit and quietly chatter until the rest of the school enters. Many pupils are polite to visitors and often open doors without being prompted.
- 7 The quality of pupils' relationships, including those with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and Traveller children, is satisfactory, with most pupils showing respect for the feelings of others. There is, however, evidence of some name calling, which is currently being addressed by the school. Pupils enjoy opportunities to take responsibility. For example, they are proud to be "helpers" to their teachers or being responsible for the music during assemblies; such opportunities are, however, currently limited. Pupils showed their initiative by raising additional funds for the school by producing and performing a talent show for the parents; this was enjoyed by all who attended.
- 8 The school's attendance figures are unsatisfactory. Attendance has improved since the last inspection but is still below the national average in spite of regular reminders to parents about the importance of regular attendance for their children's progress.

Punctuality is a significant problem for the school, which has recently adopted measures to encourage pupils to arrive on time. While these are quickly beginning to have a positive effect on punctuality, the school recognises that there is still more to do. Registers are generally taken promptly at the start of sessions although some teachers do not provide tasks for pupils to complete during this time that would provide a quiet and constructive start to each day, thus preparing pupils for the day ahead.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 9 Although satisfactory when viewed overall, the quality of the teaching pupils experience is inconsistent from year to year and their achievement tends to reflect their experience. This is partly because frequent changes of teacher have depressed the standards pupils reach. For example, National Assessment results of nine-year-olds in 2001 were below expectation and many pupils with low results had been in classes taught by a succession of supply staff. By contrast, pupils in some classes experience excellent and very good teaching. The teaching in 20 per cent of the lessons observed was very good or excellent, and that in a further 28 per cent good. It was unsatisfactory in ten per cent, a higher proportion than usually seen. More very good and better teaching was seen than at the last inspection but there was also more unsatisfactory teaching.
- 10 The best teaching was seen in the nursery, where a high proportion of lessons was excellent. The teacher and support staff work most effectively as a team to develop a highly stimulating environment that promotes all the areas of learning and, in particular, has a very strong impact on children's personal and social development. They have very high levels of understanding of the needs of young children, plan in detail to the nationally recommended early learning goals and make certain that activities match the needs of all the children through thorough and careful assessments of all aspects of the child's life in school. Children respond to this excellent provision by concentrating and working hard while thoroughly enjoying their activities. In particular, the teaching develops children's independence most effectively and consistently. Some lessons in the reception classes were less successful because the approach to teaching and learning was less consistent, sometimes showing a lack of understanding of the needs of young children, and class management skills were inadequate to retain the children's attention and keep busy with their work. Where the teaching was effective, management skills were used effectively to maintain children's concentration and activities were interesting, challenging and appropriate.
- 11 The quality of teaching for pupils between seven and nine and that for six- and seven-year-olds is also inconsistent. The teaching of literacy is broadly satisfactory overall and is used effectively in lessons in other subjects at times; however, its use is inconsistent. The teaching of numeracy is sound. Information and communication technology is well taught and good use is made of expert support staff to teach the subject; however, it is not used sufficiently widely to support learning in other subjects.
- 12 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is generally good and contributes to the positive learning for these pupils. Effective specialist support assists these pupils in reaching the planned objectives of lessons and individual education plans. Teachers often effectively plan or adapt particular activities for the needs of the pupils in English and mathematics but not as effectively in other subjects. Provision for pupils with special educational needs takes place mainly within class, with some withdrawal work taking place in literacy and mathematics. Additional literacy support is offered to both special needs pupils and mainstream pupils in withdrawal groups. Support assistants successfully carry out much of the teaching to targets within the pupils' individual education plans. Pupils who have English as an additional language and those from

Traveller families have sound, targeted support for their needs and, where attendance is good, they learn satisfactorily.

- 13 The successful lessons are those where teachers know the subject and their pupils well so that good planning provides pupils with well-matched tasks which they recognise as relevant and which encourage them to work hard and make good progress. For instance, in a very good Year 2 English lesson, clarity of objectives and planning enabled the teacher to explain well and give clear instructions. As a result, pupils knew what they had to do and why, they got on quickly, worked industriously and make good progress, producing good ideas and interesting work. A consistent and constructive approach to managing the pupils' behaviour based on high expectations created a calm atmosphere conducive to good work. As a result, pupils listened carefully and worked sensibly and responsibly. Skilled questioning drew on the ideas of pupils of all abilities, and varied, well-chosen teaching methods kept them attentive and eager to participate. A suitable pace and a sense of purpose carried pupils along and no time was wasted.
- 14 A very good Year 4 design and technology lesson was very productive because the teacher was able to inspire pupils' interest in the theme of the lesson in which the learning goals and success criteria were declared at the outset. The introduction captured pupils' attention, careful discussion and demonstration of the techniques needed ensured that pupils had enough information to make a start on the task which they undertook with enthusiasm. Pupils who worked fast were challenged by an extended task and help was available to those, who having tried several times on their own, found they could not manage. As a result, pupils rose to the challenge, working together, trying hard and persevering well.
- 15 Where lessons are unsatisfactory, it is often because they lack pace and pupils do not produce enough work. Learning objectives are not always clear enough, and because the lesson loses focus, pupils are confused. In English, some teachers do not take full advantage of the framework provided by the National Literacy Strategy to help them. For example they do not use the concluding plenary part of the lesson as well as they could. On some occasions, the teachers' questions, or the tasks they set, do not challenge the pupils enough - especially those capable of high attainment. On others, tasks are not matched well enough to pupils' needs and pupils, though differing in ability and what they have learned already, are given the same work to do. In some situations, the teacher's strategies for managing the pupils' behaviour are unequal to the task. When this happens, pupils have insufficient involvement in the lesson, their attention wanders, their behaviour deteriorates and their achievement becomes unsatisfactory.
- 16 Additional adults are usually deployed to good advantage when they support groups or individuals, who make good progress as a result. Sometimes, however, they are without a role for long periods and in some whole-class sessions their skills are not used effectively. Homework consolidates what has been learned and suitably extends the work of the lessons. The quality of marking reflects the expectations of individual teachers. Some marking, for example in mathematics, is very helpful, though not always well followed up; but much is brief, and does not provide the pupils with a satisfactory record of the help they have received to improve their work.

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

- 17 The school provides a broad curriculum that meets statutory requirements. This matches the judgement of the last inspection although there have been improvements in

the balance between subjects and in the number of subjects that are planned in the light of detailed schemes of work.

- 18 The learning opportunities for children aged from three to five years are good overall. The nursery is an exciting place for children to learn. Children are enthused by the broad range of attractively set out activities and their enthusiasm is very well harnessed in order that learning takes place in a happy and productive atmosphere, at a good pace. All of the nationally recommended areas of learning are provided for in ways that ensure that the interests and needs of all children are fully met. Threaded through all activities in all areas of learning are rich and stimulating experiences designed to extend children's personal growth and that fit them well for future learning. The reception classes provide a generally good continuation to the work of the nursery. The curriculum is of good quality and covers the nationally recommended areas of learning – although it usually lacks some of the vibrancy of the nursery and pupils' excitement is not always harnessed effectively.
- 19 A soundly based curriculum is provided for the pupils in Years 1 to 4. The weaknesses in the balance of the curriculum that were seen at the time of the last inspection have been remedied and both information and communication technology and design and technology are now properly provided for and standards have consequently improved. The community makes a satisfactory contribution to the curriculum and there is sound provision for pupils' personal development, including sex education. Strategies for the teaching of numeracy skills are effective; the strategies for the teaching of literacy skills are not fully successful; its use is inconsistent and standards in English remain lower than in other subjects. All pupils have proper access to the curriculum. The full range of National Curriculum subjects and religious education is provided and the school provides soundly based work that encourages pupils' moral, social and cultural development. In particular, the school provides a sound framework to encourage pupils to know the difference between right and wrong, and to understand the needs of others. In some lessons, this is a positive influence but it is not implemented systematically enough to have its full impact. Too little emphasis is placed on pupils' spiritual development; even many assemblies lack a sense of awe and other lessons rarely leave pupils with a sense of the wonder at the world and of life. Opportunities for pupils to reflect quietly are rare, except in the nursery, where a daily quiet time involves children looking at a lantern and thinking about how well they have learned that morning or afternoon.
- 20 Pupils with special educational needs are properly catered for, in ways that allow them to make good progress. The requirements of the national Code of Practice are fully understood and implemented. Since the last inspection provision for special educational needs has continued to develop positively. Individual education plans are in place, which are reviewed termly. Targets are focused mainly on literacy, mathematics or behavioural concerns. Most are specifically matched to the identified concerns but others are too broad to be satisfactorily reached within the time set. Whilst targets are reviewed regularly, comments on the pupils' achievement are not always completed when individual targets are met. The targets set to improve behaviour often contribute well to pupils' moral and social development. Traveller children are well supported, as are pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school's intentions that higher attainers should reach the best possible standards are not fully realised because the curriculum provided, whilst allowing them to reach good standards, does not challenge them to reach the very good standards of which some are capable.
- 21 The school has a tradition of supporting learning through the use of educational visits and by means of visiting experts such as, for example, writers and artists. Much good work has resulted from this approach. This enriching element has been less evident of

late largely because of the recent, relatively high number of staff changes, including those at senior level. The school's intention to resume the programme is a positive move. From time to time, out-of-school clubs have enriched the lives and learning of pupils. At present there is a French Club and a football club for boys and girls. However, there is no reliable co-ordination of this type of provision, so that the enthusiasms of teachers, parents and others are not systematically made available to pupils out of school hours. The view of a significant proportion of parents that the school does not currently provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons is largely justified. There are sound links with the schools to which pupils transfer, allowing learning to be built on in later years.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 22 The school has satisfactory procedures in place to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, and uses appropriate agencies to support the needs of individual pupils. There is a named person responsible for child protection and the school follows the local education authority's guidelines. Pupils are well known to staff and feel confident to approach any adult if they have worries or concerns. The school follows the local education authority guidelines for health and safety and has relevant procedures in place, although the policy for assessing risk is only in draft form. Clear procedures are followed to report and record accidents. The school provides an appropriate environment in which pupils and staff can work.
- 23 The school has good procedures to monitor attendance and most parents are clear about them and follow them if their child is absent from school. However, some parents fail to give reasons for their child's absence and this results in the school having higher than usual numbers of pupils whose absences are unauthorised. The school now works closely with the educational welfare officer to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. Recent initiatives have been introduced to encourage pupils to arrive at school on time to enable lessons to start promptly and free from interruptions and these are already having a positive affect with pupils eager to be there at the start of the school day.
- 24 Pupils' personal development needs are met through staff knowing each individual child and quickly recognising any change in behaviour or attitude. Apart from in the nursery, there is no formal recording of pupils' development although these areas are reported to parents through the annual written progress reports. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good. A clear register is kept and informal assessment and class teacher discussion are the starting points for support. Regular reviews give a good picture of pupils' progress alongside the tracking of other pupils' progress across the school. There is good liaison with outside agencies that include specific support for statemented pupils and behaviour and Traveller children support. Statements and reviews for pupils at each stage of the Code of Practice are up to date and well kept. However, not all support staff are required to record or report on the progress of pupils and as a result their recording is not specifically monitored or consistent across the school. Teachers review pupils' targets termly. However, the absence of some signatures from parents suggests that practice at review is inconsistent. Whilst the content of individual educational plans is similar, the format is not consistent across the school and consequently not always easy to interpret. The support teacher for pupils from Traveller families keeps clear records of the targets set for them so that their progress is clearly tracked. Those pupils who have English as an additional language or are bilingual have positive access to support services designed to meet their needs.

- 25 The behaviour of pupils is supported through a range of reward systems throughout the school but there is an inconsistent approach to the use of such rewards with some teachers using very positive and clear systems and others using them less often. The newly formed "Buddy System" supports pupils who feel insecure at playtimes with older pupils being given responsibility to care for younger pupils.
- 26 The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance are linked to the assessment procedures. These are well developed in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology and in the nursery. However, this good practice has not been fully and consistently established in other subjects. The assessment information gathered is not consistently used to inform the planning by teachers for future lessons to enable activities to build on previous learning experiences or to consolidate areas that may not have been fully understood by all pupils. The recently appointed assessment co-ordinator is aware of the underdeveloped use of assessment data and is currently preparing to utilise a suitable computer program to produce more focused and useful information to support teachers.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 27 The majority of parents are satisfied with what the school provides and are supportive. Parents receive regular information through letters home which tell them of day to day routines and expectations. The prospectus sent to new parents of the school contains all the statutory information required, daily routines and general information. There is, however, little written information sent home regarding the curriculum and the specific subject areas that are to be taught in class. This means that parents find it difficult to support their children's learning by sharing first hand knowledge or providing artefacts. However, the school has held a successful curriculum evening to tell parents about the new approaches and strategies used to teach their children. Annual written reports inform parents of the areas their children have studied over the year and areas of personal development. While these reports indicate areas for future development, these are often too general and unhelpful to parents. Parent consultation evenings are organised throughout the year; however, many parents have had their appointments postponed because of staff absences and so have been unable to discuss their child's progress with the class teacher. This aspect of the school's relationship with parents is less good than it was at the last inspection and a significant number feel that the school does not work closely enough with parents. Parents of children with special educational needs are regularly informed and involved in their child's learning. Parents are involved at an early stage when pupils are identified as having particular needs and they have the opportunity to attend reviews, although the lack of signatures on some plans within Stages 2 to 3 suggests that not all do attend. It is clear that the majority of parents support the work done on behalf of their children and where possible take part in supporting some of the targets.
- 28 A small number of parents regularly help in classrooms and on trips. The school values their help. Parents are invited to school productions, which they appreciate and enjoy. The Friends Group, who organise social and fundraising occasions that provide additional resources for the school, supports the school very well; for example, they provided playground markings and new benches to make the playground more stimulating and suitable for all pupils. Their time and dedication is very much appreciated by the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 29 The new headteacher has, in the six weeks he has been at the school, identified priority areas for action after a period of considerable disruption and change and, through very effective leadership, is beginning to unite the school in putting plans into action. His very well developed communication skills and quiet, confident approach have already made a difference to the working atmosphere of the school and the involvement of external agencies such as the education welfare officer is beginning to make a difference to the long-standing problems of attendance and punctuality. The acting deputy headteacher has provided strong support during the period of transition between headteachers. With new appointments imminent, the school will soon be in a position to develop a management team involving new and existing staff and the evidence from the inspection is that there is now a very good shared commitment to take the school forward successfully. The role of subject and other co-ordinators and phase managers has been under-developed but plans are now in place to empower them to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects in addition to the present arrangements for them to monitor planning and audit resources. The co-ordinators are keen to extend their responsibilities in this way. The existing senior management team is already beginning to remedy the weakness in the monitoring of teaching and performance management arrangements, at present only partially in place, are set to be completed in the near future. Staff and governors are starting to work together to identify further priorities to improve standards and quality of education.
- 30 The chair of the governing body is fully committed to the school and, under her leadership, the governing body is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities. Governors' participation is hindered, however, as there are no clear written roles and responsibilities for them to help focus their work. There is a suitable committee structure to support the governing body's work although these committees also have no clear terms of reference. The school improvement plan is presented to the governors in draft form to enable them to make suggested amendments. Teachers make presentations of curriculum subjects to the governors to help inform them of the areas taught in the school. However, the governors' knowledge of the school largely relies on information from the headteacher and the occasional visit with a particular focus. This approach limits governors from promoting and developing their role as the school's critical friend. Governors are enthusiastic and willing to support the school in all aspects of its work. They have made some telling decisions in agreement with the previous headteacher; for example, their decision to appoint an office manager has had a significant impact on the amount of time the headteacher has had to spend on routine administrative tasks. However, they have not been sufficiently involved in decision making and shaping the direction of the school. This situation is changing. For example, governors have recently set up a joint consultative committee to link with staff representatives and the headteacher is to issue a staff survey form that will be returned directly to the governors to elicit their views on how to improve the school.
- 31 The school's arrangements for financial planning are satisfactory. Educational priorities in the school improvement plan help to determine the structure of the budget; with a new senior management team, new priorities are being identified, with inevitable repercussions for the next budget. The office manager's financial expertise is having a positive effect on financial management and the school is rapidly developing its use of information and communication technology to more accurately monitor spending as well as to track pupils' progress. Regular and detailed reports are prepared and presented to the governors' finance committee to inform them in detail about the progress of expenditure. Effective use is made of additional funding for pupils with special educational needs and the funding from the Education Achievement Zone has been appropriately dedicated to staff development, which is beginning to have a positive effect

on the quality of teaching. Spending decisions take careful account of both financial best value and the effect that spending will have on standards

- 32 The staffing of the school has been problematic over the past few years with many staff leaving and arriving and teacher absence leading to the employment of large numbers of temporary teachers. This has made the matching of teaching to the needs of each age group and subject difficult; consequently, not all subjects are confidently led and not all classes have teachers with expertise in teaching that age group. However, the headteacher's early monitoring activities, the team building that is beginning to occur and plans to develop the co-ordinator role show that the school is very well placed to provide a more settled staffing base very quickly. The school's accommodation has a marked positive impact on the quality of learning and, in particular, on pupils' personal development because of the effective way in which it is used. The generous space on the first floor is used to good effect to develop pupils' library and computer skills as well as providing a suitable space for music and drama. The classroom arrangements downstairs enable younger pupils to benefit from seeing older pupils at work as well as providing an audience for older pupils to share their work in, for example, story writing or making pop-up books. The shared space is used most effectively to promote the learning of withdrawal groups from each class, thus providing more space in the classrooms. The school's outside accommodation is used well but will benefit from the implementation of existing plans to develop a more extensive play area for the reception children and to further develop the playground and sports area.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

33 In order to ensure the school's improvement, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- Raise pupils' standards in writing and speaking and listening by:
 - Ensuring a consistent approach to teaching literacy in all classes;
 - Developing a consistent approach to handwriting;
 - Extending the use of literacy to support learning and raise standards in other subjects, such as history and religious education. (*paragraphs 51 – 57, 60*)
- Ensure that approaches to teaching and learning become more consistent throughout the school by:
 - Developing systematic monitoring and evaluation systems and staff training to share existing good practice more widely;
 - Practising consistent behaviour management in all classes by establishing and sharing routines and reward systems;
 - Ensuring that the present good assessment procedures are used more consistently by all teachers, are extended to all subjects and are used to inform teachers' planning more systematically. (*paragraphs 9, 11, 15, 24, 25, 29*)
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the governors to enable them to play a more active part in shaping the direction of the school and overseeing its impact on pupils' all-round achievement. (*paragraph 30*)
- Provide fuller and more regular information for parents about their children's progress and the work they do in school. (*paragraph 27*)

In addition, the school should consider the following less urgent issues when developing their action plan:

- Provide more planned opportunities for pupils to reflect and to celebrate the wonders of life. (*paragraph 19*)
- Make more extensive use of information and communication technology to support learning in other subjects. (*paragraph 94*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	8	17	25	6	0	0
Percentage	7	13	28	41	10	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	40	370
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	143

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	4	161

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	41
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.0

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	26	42	68

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	15	23
	Girls	36	38	40
	Total	51	53	63
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75 (72)	78 (80)	93 (91)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	23	23
	Girls	38	40	40
	Total	53	63	63
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	78 (72)	93 (78)	93 (80)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	284
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28.2
Average class size	28.5

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	7.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	82

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	40.0
Total number of education support staff	3.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	75
Number of pupils per FTE adult	10.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

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	1	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	2000/2001
	£
Total income	845860
Total expenditure	813156
Expenditure per pupil	1874
Balance brought forward from previous year	34139
Balance carried forward to next year	66843

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	410
Number of questionnaires returned	236

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	32	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	40	7	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	41	6	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	45	13	5	7
The teaching is good.	54	38	3	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	34	26	7	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	42	6	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	33	2	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	29	42	18	5	6
The school is well led and managed.	41	42	8	1	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	45	6	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	33	25	3	19

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- 34 Provision in the foundation stage is through a large nursery and three reception classes. Children attend the nursery part-time, either in the mornings or the afternoons. At the time of the last inspection, the nursery had only recently been established but was beginning to operate effectively. When children start in nursery, most have very low concentration levels, lower even than those of children beginning nursery in other local schools where the proportion of free school meals is higher. They have very under-developed skills in speaking and listening and their grasp of number is well below expectation. When they enter the reception classes, they have made substantial progress and, by the time they leave reception, many are on target to achieve the early learning goals, although, overall, their attainment is just below expectations for their age in all the areas of learning, being slightly weaker in communication, language and literacy. Children, including those with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language, Traveller children and higher attainers, achieve well. There has been an improvement since the last inspection.
- 35 The nursery is extremely effectively organised in a very stimulating way to facilitate children's development in all the areas of learning of the foundation stage curriculum and the teacher and nursery nurses operate extremely well as a team. Reception classrooms are more variable in the quality of the organisation of space but, at best, use the space well to provide an interesting variety of activity. The teachers and support staff in nursery and reception classes plan together, paying careful attention to the early learning goals appropriate for these young children, and set up classrooms and select materials to reflect that planning. At the time of the inspection, for example, children worked on a jungle theme so that stories mostly involved jungle animals, children learnt counting rhymes about jungle animals and sand and water play featured swamps and forests. A jungle area in the nursery was covered with woven nets to become a credible and exciting jungle den for children to explore and listen to jungle noises on a tape. Less generous space in the reception classrooms means that the children there had less free rein but were nonetheless able to link their learning through the jungle theme on many occasions.
- 36 Teaching and learning in the nursery are excellent with excellent contributions from highly skilled and experienced support staff, an extremely rich and appropriate learning environment and very well developed systems for assessing and tracking children's achievements and personal development. Adults in the nursery operate extremely effectively as a team with notable levels of consistency of approach. Children with particular needs are carefully monitored and provided for. All children in nursery have an individual record of achievement that not only enables the teacher to keep track of progress but also enables parents to see how well their child is doing. Teaching in the reception classes ranges from very good to unsatisfactory and is good overall. Weaknesses in some lessons include a lack of understanding of the needs of young children and difficulty in keeping lively and easily distracted children busily working. The leadership and management of the foundation stage are strong; the co-ordinator is tackling the problem of inconsistent teaching. The practice of planning together and the sharing of the effective assessment processes are used, with some success, to develop a common approach to the education of these young children; however, there is some way to go before practice is consistent in all three reception classes.

Personal, social and emotional development

- 37 In nursery, children's attitudes and behaviour are excellent. In a very short time, excellent provision and teaching develop their personal and social skills to a very great degree, so that, half way through the year, the nursery is a hive of industry with children working happily individually and together under the careful eye of the nursery staff. The children are developing a real interest in learning and, with friendly but insistent help, they develop their capacity for concentration. In one lesson, for example, the nursery nurse very imaginatively helped children to learn to take turns in a game. Children are encouraged to be independent and staff are very good at giving children time to complete tasks such as putting on their shoes and coats without intervening unnecessarily. Consequently, children learn to cope with everyday activities and soon learn the routines of the day. The teacher is always available for parents at the beginning or end of sessions and parents are welcome to stay with their children to see them settled; a father, for example, started painting tigers with his daughter until she was engrossed in the task. Children happily wave goodbye to their parents and settle quickly to their work. The teacher and support staff have very consistent approaches to child management that are based on positive relationships and make expert use of positive behaviour strategies; consequently children know exactly what kind of behaviour is expected of them and respond accordingly. Children's experience and confidence are very effectively developed through their regular weekly forays into the main school; each group visits the main school on three occasions each week, following a route carefully chosen to ensure that they see as much of the school as possible. They visit the library, the information and communication technology suite and the hall for physical education. Other aspects of children's personal development are very well provided for. For example, after the children have put their coats on towards the end of each session, they sit quietly, watch the teacher or nursery nurse solemnly light the lantern and think about what they have done during the session and whether they have done or behaved as well as they might – a beautiful little ceremony that promotes children's spiritual, moral and social development very well. A special person of the day is chosen at another little ceremony and the child chosen wears the special person badge with pride.
- 38 In the reception classes, while behaviour is well managed by the teachers for the most part, levels of concentration are sometimes low and children are easily distracted. In some classes, children's independence is very well fostered but in others there is a tendency for the teachers to do too much for the children. At best, work and behaviour routines are very effectively established. While space prohibits the range and variety of working areas seen in the nursery, classrooms are set out in interesting ways to stimulate children's interest and, particularly in one classroom, to promote independence.

Communication, language and literacy

- 39 Although children arrive in the nursery with weak language skills, the close attention staff give to this aspect of development helps to promote good progress so that, although many children are still likely to be below average, by the end of the reception year, their language skills have improved, particularly in reading. They know about books and understand that words convey meaning, they are beginning to read and know the sounds made by individual letters. When speaking, some talk clearly, whilst others are still hesitant and have difficulty in expressing their ideas. Listening skills are developing and children are particularly attentive to stories, which most teachers and support staff tell extremely effectively. Some children are able to write their own names and a few are beginning to form sentences. They know a range of songs and rhymes and enjoy demonstrating their knowledge. Children with special educational needs make good progress because of the well-informed support they receive and because adults develop their confidence and self-esteem by helping them to make useful contributions to

discussions. Children with English as an additional language are well supported and make steady progress, as do the Traveller children.

- 40 Adults very successfully work very hard to get children in the nursery to listen and understand instructions because they are very clear exactly what it is they want the child to learn. The very attractive resources and the stimulating activities in nursery are designed to provide maximum opportunities for language development and children progress very well because the atmosphere is so positive, enthusiastic and rich in communication. Adults in the nursery all use lively and appropriate speaking skills, setting an excellent example, for instance, in reading aloud and enjoying stories and verses. Books have a very high profile in the nursery and children often choose to sit in the reading area quietly looking through a book. The regular sessions in the library are extremely productive in helping children value and enjoy books and reading. There is a consistently dynamic approach by all the adults that gains and retains children's interest, concentration and involvement. The adults' very high level of expectation is reflected in the children's growing confidence in answering questions or speaking out spontaneously; for example, when a child asked why a story was called 'Roarr', before the teacher could respond, another boy said, 'Because he might want to roarr all night', extending the sounds in 'roar' to make his point. Teachers in the reception classes are also skilled at telling story, often through the imaginative use of such resources as those in the attractive and most useful story sacks that parents have made. Adults in the nursery give very good attention to the development of children's writing skills, teaching them, for example, the correct way to hold a pencil. Some teaching in the reception classes is less careful about this and, consequently, children's written work is sometimes untidy with poorly formed letters. In the best lessons, the teaching uses a very good range of strategies for managing and controlling a lively class by very effectively clarifying and taking the children's ideas further. In some lessons, however, the teaching fails to motivate some of the pupils, particularly in completing work independently, and the pace of learning drops for all children while order is restored. In other lessons, too many learning objectives are planned for a short time, so that each point is made only superficially and children learn very little; the problem is sometimes exacerbated because some of the objectives are inappropriate for such young children.

Mathematical development

- 41 Whilst overall standards are on course to be below national expectations, children make good progress from a very low starting point and a significant number are on line to reach the expected level by the time they leave the reception classes. Many children in nursery can count confidently and are beginning to relate numbers to articles; for example, helped by an adult, children counted the number of crocodile's teeth and one boy, with help, recognised that the crocodile needed two more teeth to give him ten. A boy measured his height against the neck of the measuring giraffe, counting on, with help, from 130 centimetres to 135. Children's counting skills are enhanced through participating in the wide variety of number songs and rhymes that they learn and enjoy. Children know that Jack is small and the giant big. They recognise shapes when doing jigsaws and are beginning to learn the names of mathematical shapes. In reception, children count on and count back using a line of number and are familiar with the names of numbers above ten. They are beginning to know which numbers are bigger than others but struggle to decide which is the smaller of 4 and 2.
- 42 Teaching and learning are excellent in the nursery and good in the reception classes. This area of learning is well supported by the quality of the classroom displays. Learning resources, particularly in the nursery, are very stimulating and often relate to the central theme of, for example, jungles. Numerals arranged in lines and squares and lists of

mathematical terms are well displayed to help children in their learning in all classrooms. The space outside classrooms is used well in the reception classes and very effective support staff extend children's learning, particularly that of children with special educational needs and lower attaining children. Teachers keep careful records of the progress of individuals and take account of these in their planning and in grouping children for extra support. Work in reception includes more formal numeracy lessons that help to prepare children for the routines they will meet when they move to Year 1.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- 43 Many children have well below average skills in this aspect when they arrive at school but they make good progress to the point where they are able to operate in all the recommended areas albeit with less success than might be expected by the time they leave the reception classes. In the nursery, children gain a good knowledge of the characteristics of common jungle animals and birds – they know, for example, that giraffes, unlike tigers, don't bite. They produce 'maps' of the playground, indicating key features. Reception children find the approximate position of Ashington on the globe and look at appropriate clothing for wearing in different climates. They learn about fruits that are common in Africa, following up their learning from their work on an African story. They learn about Chinese customs and artefacts, practising the use of the chopsticks that some of them have brought to school. Children in all classes are grouped and the group names often reinforce learning, as, for example, with the 'stars' and the 'moons' in the nursery. Children in the nursery enjoy using the computer there and are becoming confident in moving shapes around the screen using the mouse. They also have a weekly visit to the computer suite in the main school, which further develops their confidence in using the computer. Reception children are also beginning to develop their confidence in using, for example, a program to create shape patterns in a variety of colours. Children with English as an additional language cope well with the computer with some support and use it independently with some success.
- 44 The excellent teaching in the nursery provides children with a wide range of appropriate practical activities. The nursery is full of attractively organised resources, which provoke curiosity and stimulate language. The jungle den, which includes a listening centre for children to hear the noises of the jungle, stimulates great interest and much learning across many areas of learning. In reception, teachers and support staff use attractive resources well to promote learning. Teachers track children's progress well in information and communication technology and, as in writing, use the information to set individual targets. In the most effective lessons, teachers provide the children with artefacts to handle and experience. In some lessons, children were not very clear about what they were expected to do and consequently they made little progress.

Physical development

- 45 The nursery's very good facilities for outdoor play enable children to make good progress in this area of learning. In addition, the children have regular opportunities to use the large hall in the main school. Reception children, too, have a suitable area and good resources for outside play. The children respond well to opportunities to use equipment outside. For example, reception children enjoyed the large letters that they 'painted' on the wall in sky writing, improving their skills in letter formation. They can arrange large bricks with some skill and ride bicycles around a marked track without hitting the cones too often. In the nursery, fine motor skills are very well developed through the adults'

careful attention to the way in which children hold brushes and modelling tools. Children learn to use scissors independently to cut paper for their models. They also develop hand and eye co-ordination well in a mathematics related activity where they roll a ball to hit a target. By the time they leave the reception classes, children's physical development is likely to be still below average.

- 46 Teaching is good overall; it is excellent in the nursery and satisfactory in the reception classes. Some teaching of physical development in reception is unsatisfactory because the teaching provides activities that are unsuitable for young children's needs. The school's resources to support children's physical development are good. The spacious hall is regularly used by both nursery and reception children and the outside play areas are well equipped with apparatus and toy vehicles. When using the hall for dance, some lessons are unsuccessful because too many children do not do what the teacher has asked and because the teacher does not use the taped music to best effect. Opportunities for children to develop and control small movements are many in all classes, from the wide range of construction kits to sand and water play and tracing activities. Children enjoy completing the increasingly difficult range of attractive jigsaws. Staff use praise well to encourage progress.

Creative development

- 47 The children make good progress in developing their creative skills across a range of media. Nursery children can paint with reasonable control and some with above-average skills. For example, a painting of a crocodile captured its roughness, colour and overall shape very well considering the age of the artist. Other paintings are less successful because of the children's weak manipulative skills, although even here, there is evident progress being made. Children print using a range of objects and make interesting box models. The children know the names of colours and can mix them when painting. The quality of their products is, however, overall below what would be expected of children at this stage by the time they leave the reception classes. All the children know a number of poems and rhymes, which they sing with enthusiasm, a fine sense of rhythm and some regard for tune. Nursery children enjoy role play and those in reception are excited by drama, particularly when working in a group. In reception, the children control the mouse well when making coloured patterns on the computer.
- 48 Teaching is very good, particularly in the nursery, and is based upon an understanding of the kind of experiences that will promote children's creative development. Staff help children to become involved in creative activity and use language well to encourage improved results. The resources provided are attractive and encourage children sometimes to experiment and sometimes to follow guidelines, although there is a clear emphasis on the importance of individual expression in the nursery. Stories, rhymes, songs and drama are regular features of life in the foundation stage.

ENGLISH

- 49 The trend in the National Curriculum assessment results for seven-year-olds has been upwards since the last inspection in both reading and writing. Results in 2001 were below the national average in both these aspects of the subject, but above the average of schools where a similar proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. Viewed over the same period, boys' results have differed from girls' results, but have done so in line with the national pattern.
- 50 Work seen during the inspection was consistent with results below the national average in speaking and listening and writing at both seven and nine. Standards in reading were

nearer to those appropriate to pupils of these ages. Given their starting point when they begin Year 1, achievement in English by the end of both Year 2 and Year 4 is satisfactory.

- 51 Standards of speaking and listening by the age of seven and the age of nine are below average because pupils have had insufficient opportunity to build up the required skills and confidence. In Year 1 and Year 2, pupils listen carefully to their teacher but, while some show that they have listened effectively, many are easily distracted and lose concentration. Year 1 pupils have ideas to share, but have insufficient language to articulate them. The style of questioning in some lessons encourages one-word answers and so does not encourage pupils to think for themselves and limits their opportunity to express themselves. The most able Year 2 pupils speak to the purpose and are thoughtful and articulate, particularly where the teacher's calm manner creates a supportive atmosphere, but the speaking skills of many are not well developed. They take a long time to turn thoughts into words and their contributions are brief, composed of single words and short phrases.
- 52 Many pupils between the ages of seven and nine are confident talkers in informal situations, but are less successful as speakers. They respond to questions briefly, rarely elaborating their answers. Sometimes, this is because teachers, understandably concerned to maintain the pace of a lesson, do not give enough time for pupils to reply fully. By the age of nine, the most able pupils discuss their work using a suitable vocabulary to justify their opinions, but others, in class or when talking about their work to adults, are much less skilled in expressing their ideas.
- 53 Standards of reading are close to those expected of pupils at both the age of seven and nine because of the particular attention teachers have been paying to developing pupils' reading skills. The highest-attaining seven-year-olds read accurately, with energy and enjoyment. Average attainers read with reasonable confidence, recognising many words, and can talk about what they read. The lower attainers either recognise few words in a familiar text and lack the skills to tackle them, or, having read the words accurately, have poor comprehension skills. By the age of nine, the highest-attaining pupils read efficiently and accurately: the best read with good expression and clearly enjoy books. Those of average attainment read hesitantly with incomplete comprehension, misreading simple words. The lower-attaining pupils find many familiar words difficult, and have inadequate strategies for reading unfamiliar words. Most pupils at this stage have satisfactory library skills, and can use a contents page or index effectively.
- 54 The standard of pupils' writing, particularly that of many boys, is below average because, although pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 – 4, they start from a low base. It is also because teachers do not expect enough of them, particularly the higher attainers. In some lessons, for example, all pupils are given the same task to do. When the quicker pupils finish early they are given more work of the same kind to do. At the age of seven, the highest-attaining pupils write well-constructed narrative. In one instance, a girl wrote graphically about the Great Fire of London, choosing words well for their dramatic effect. Her handwriting has well-formed letters and her spelling is correct or plausible. More typically, pupils know the conventions of letter writing, write convincing instructions and re-tell stories accurately, observing some conventions of spelling and punctuation. Their handwriting is legible but uneven. The lower attainers manage a few words, supported by adult script, but their handwriting is immature, a mixture of letters inaccurately placed on the page.

- 55 The writing of many nine-year-olds is imaginative. The best demonstrates interesting ideas, careful planning and drafting, although not always with a convincing structure; in some cases, technical weaknesses work against a good story to make even the best writing average in overall quality. Many other pupils have interesting ideas which are limited by unsatisfactory skills. Although their handwriting is legible and joined-up, the use of capital letters at the beginning of sentences and full stops at the end is insecure. The spelling of common words, such as 'Saturday' or 'said', is inaccurate. The writing of the less able pupils is often brief and although it may put ideas in sequence, it does not show a secure grasp of narrative structure. Their handwriting although legible is immature, and spelling is uncertain.
- 56 Nevertheless, pupils' books show the handwriting of the younger pupils becoming more controlled over time, and punctuation becoming better established. The more able pupils organise their work into better sentences with capitals and full stops. Pupils in the upper part of the school also make satisfactory progress over time. The most able improve their sentence structure and extend their choice of words. The work of others becomes more organised and its legibility improves. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and achieve appropriately, taking account of their starting points and their targets. They work well when supported by the skilful special needs assistants and produce work consistent with expectations. Pupils with English as an additional language also develop their skills steadily, as do Traveller pupils.
- 57 Despite the progress they make, the work of many pupils is not satisfactorily presented. The handwriting of a significant proportion at all points in the school is not as good as it should be. This is at least in part because many pupils - up to a third in many classes - do not hold their pencils properly. This makes their writing laborious and lacking in fluency. Too many pupils do not join their letters.
- 58 Pupils' other literacy skills are satisfactorily supported in different subjects. There are good opportunities for extended writing in history and religious education, for example. Pupils are given practice in taking notes in history and geography and in writing for the record in science. Information and communication technology is insufficiently used in support of English.
- 59 The quality of the teaching is inconsistent but overall it is satisfactory for both infant and junior pupils, resulting in satisfactory attitudes and behaviour.
- 60 The successful lessons are those where teachers know the subject and their pupils well so that good planning provides pupils with well-matched tasks which they recognise as relevant. For instance, in a very good Year 2 lesson, clarity of objectives and planning enabled the teacher to explain well and give clear instructions. As a result, pupils knew what they had to do and why, they got on quickly, worked industriously and made good progress, producing good ideas and interesting work. A consistent and constructive approach to managing the pupils' behaviour based on high expectations created a calm atmosphere conducive to good work. As a result, pupils listened carefully and worked sensibly and responsibly. Skilled questioning drew on the ideas of pupils of all abilities, and varied, well-chosen teaching methods kept them attentive and eager to participate. A suitable pace and a sense of purpose carried pupils along and no time was wasted.
- 61 Where lessons are unsatisfactory, it is often because they lack pace. Learning objectives are not always clear enough, and because the lesson loses focus, pupils are confused. Some teachers do not take full advantage of the framework provided by the National Literacy Strategy to help them. For example, they do not use the plenary part of the lesson as well as they could to provide opportunities for speaking and listening or to

help the pupils review what they have learned and set the agenda for the next lesson. On some occasions, the teacher's role is too prominent. On others, the teacher's questions, or the tasks they set, do not challenge the pupils enough. In some, the teacher's strategies for managing the pupils' behaviour are unequal to the task. When this happens, because pupils, often the boys, have insufficient involvement in the lesson, their attention wanders, their behaviour deteriorates and their achievement becomes unsatisfactory.

- 62 Additional adults are usually deployed to good advantage to support groups or individuals who make good progress as a result. Sometimes, however, they are without a role for long periods. Homework consolidates what has been learned and suitably extends the work of the lessons. The quality of marking reflects the expectations of individual teachers. Some marking is helpful but much is not a satisfactory record of the help given the pupil to improve the work.
- 63 The subject has maintained the position described in the last inspection report. The quality of teaching is similar. Assessment is now well organised to support pupils and indicate to teachers areas for future attention, including those groups of pupils needing particular help. As a result, it is helping to improve standards. The monitoring of teachers' planning is now in place, but not the monitoring of pupils' progress or the quality of the teaching they experience. Resources for the subject, criticised last time, have improved and are good. The library stock, good in quantity and quality, can support the level of independent work reasonably to be expected of many pupils.

MATHEMATICS

- 64 In nationally designed tests for nine-year-olds that the school used in 2001, overall standards were below nationally expected levels. A significant minority of these pupils had been taught over the previous year by a large number of teachers on short-term contracts and these pupils scored poorly. Other pupils in the year group reached standards that were close to average. The attainment of the present Year 4 is consistent with that of the majority of last year's pupils and attainment is in line with the national average.
- 65 In the 2001 national tests for seven-year-olds, standards were almost identical to the national average and the present Year 2 is on track to reach the same standards. Standards in these tests have risen in each of the past four years from well below average to their present creditable levels. Pupils make good progress between the ages of five and nine years, as they enter Year 1 with standards that are below the national average. Whilst overall attainment is similar to that seen at the time of the last inspection, a larger proportion of pupils now reach higher levels.
- 66 Pupils' good achievement owes much to the sound teaching seen at all stages, with some good teaching also present, especially in the infant classes. It is based on careful, whole-school planning that draws well on the National Numeracy Strategy and the use of a thoughtfully chosen published scheme that matches closely the school's approach and objectives.
- 67 A significant minority of nine-year-old pupils reach standards in all aspects of mathematics that are more typical of ten or eleven-year-olds. For example, they understand and complete number sequences using negative numbers; they add and subtract numbers into the thousands and have a good grasp of shape and measurement. They handle data confidently and in this their progress is enhanced by the use of appropriate computer programs and the teaching of computer skills. On

occasions these higher attainers – and others - rush too enthusiastically into work and it becomes untidy – and thus inaccurate - or they fail to understand the question because they do not read it carefully enough. If these issues were successfully tackled, some could reach very good standards. Lower attainers understand odd and even numbers and can count accurately in twos. They can add mentally two numbers such as 300 and 56 but generally find adding more complex numbers too hard. They know the main characteristics of shapes such as squares and cubes and can successfully tackle simple shopping sums involving subtraction from, for example, 50p.

- 68 Most seven-year-olds enjoy mathematics and generally work hard, with the result that they handle number competently, and work with shape and measurement with understanding. Higher attainers apply their knowledge of number facts alongside a well-developed problem solving ability to, for example, problems related to weighing and measuring. The work of lower attainers is affected by poor recollection of number facts.
- 69 Teaching throughout the school is sound, with some very good teaching seen in both infant and junior classes. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Pupils respond enthusiastically to teaching and usually try hard, contributing to their all-round good progress. The negative side to this is that teachers too often fail to channel this enthusiasm sufficiently and classroom noise levels rise, work is poorly set out and pupils make mistakes that they should not, bearing in mind their levels of skills and understanding. A substantial proportion of pupils' work is undated (the school has a policy to date all work), jumbled together and with digits such as 3, 5, 7 and 9 reversed, even by otherwise good mathematicians. In some lessons, teachers set work for the whole class rather than matching it to what pupils already know, so that some pupils struggle with work that is too hard for them and others quickly finish it. On occasions, other subjects are used well to enhance learning in mathematics. For example, a lesson on finding words in a dictionary used and developed pupils' knowledge of fractions; information and communication technology makes a substantial contribution to work in data handling. There are occasions when opportunities to do this are missed and a more systematic approach is needed if such links are to make their full contribution.
- 70 Junior aged pupils are taught not in their class groups but in different groups to which they are allocated on the basis of how well they perform in tests. There are some advantages associated with this, notably the achievements of lower attainers, most of whom do better than was forecast at the beginning of the year. Some difficulties remain to be resolved: time is lost whilst pupils move from their classes to their mathematics groups; the work given is too often aimed at the middle attainers, especially in the 'top' group, with the result that higher attainers do not achieve as well as they should.
- 71 Much of the best teaching and learning stems from effective management, involving the current mathematics co-ordinator, that took place some time ago. Effective staff training allowed the school to get the best from the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and the careful monitoring of teaching and learning ensured that good practice was shared and learned from. More recently, there has been less of this team approach, with less monitoring of lessons, making it difficult to continue to share good practice and to spot and improve areas of weakness. However, there is a renewed vigour and determination to improve practice and this puts the school in a good position to make the necessary improvements.

SCIENCE

- 72 Standards in all elements of the science curriculum are in line with expectations for seven- and nine-year-olds. The standards seen at the last inspection have been maintained. Pupils of all levels of ability achieve well because the teachers relate the material to pupils' own experience and provide resources that pupils can examine at first hand; exploring different kinds of rock by touch before examining them minutely under a magnifying glass, for example. This enabled pupils to understand clearly what the teacher meant in describing the particles in conglomerate rock as being like the bits of biscuit in the melted chocolate that they had seen (and tasted) before. Pupils with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and Traveller pupils learn as well as the others because teachers are well aware of their particular needs and, when support staff are available, they are used well to support these pupils. Higher attainers do equally well because teachers question skilfully to tease out more detailed answers from those who are capable and more is expected of them in their recording of the investigation.
- 73 Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good; this results in high levels of pupils' interest and enjoyment. There is an appropriate emphasis on investigation and teachers plan well together to ensure that pupils in each year group receive similar experiences. Teachers are careful to share the learning objectives with the class so that pupils are well aware of what they are meant to learn and can confirm whether or not they have learnt it in the concluding plenary session at the end of the lesson. Most lessons include some practical activity or discussion of practical applications of the learning and work builds systematically from lesson to lesson. For example, in the first session of a topic on health and growth, pupils in Years 1 and 2 began by exploring what they already knew about food and healthy eating; the session therefore got off to a brisk start with pupils interested from the beginning. Their interest was further engaged when the teacher provided real items of food for the pupils to sort into fruit, vegetables and so on, discussing which foods contained vitamins and which were of less benefit to healthy growth. Teachers are good at making the learning come alive for the pupils; consequently pupils have positive attitudes to the subject, enjoying the opportunities for practical work related to their own experience. They behave very well.
- 74 The effective subject co-ordinator has introduced a policy and scheme of work that ensures a full and relevant curriculum in which assessment can sensibly inform planning. There is a very good capacity to take the subject even further.

ART AND DESIGN

- 75 Standards reached by pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 are higher than those expected of pupils the same age and pupils of all abilities achieve well in a good range of different art styles.
- 76 Pupils in Year 1, for example, learn to observe carefully, in one instance looking at sunflowers, in another looking at human faces, building up a portrait after pencil-sketching individual features. Paper collages, 'Sharks are looking for their dinner', in which menacing dark shapes chase fish round columns of green seaweed, are the result of careful cutting and shapes accurately placed on the paper. In Year 2, pupils develop additional techniques. In one instance, pastels and chalk give them scope to develop atmospheric pictures of the Great Fire of London, and well controlled paint in vivid colours depicts the conflagration well.
- 77 Year 3 pupils add different textures to the collages and work on patterns, studying Mondrian and Bridget Riley for ideas to develop, and using the computers to generate images which reflect the work of the established artists. Well-controlled brush and

paintwork depicts music – for example, the Hall of the Mountain King met during music lessons. An extension of the paint and appliqué techniques enabled Year 4 pupils to make convincing Roman shields as part of history and their ‘Greek’ pots, interpreted with modern themes, demonstrate good control of clay and a clear understanding of decorated slip techniques. They made effective dream pictures after studying the style of Salvador Dali.

- 78 The practice of appointing an artist in residence is effective in extending pupils’ art experiences and skills. For example, in one such project, a textile wall hanging by Year 3 based on Hindu symbols, individual medallions stitched by pupils were incorporated into the main composition which explored the theme through rich colours. Ceramic tiles made by different year groups show pupils using different techniques with the support of a specialist in this field.
- 79 Because no art lessons were seen it is not possible to judge the quality of teaching or the pupils’ attitudes to art. Art, however, is a popular choice of pupils in the Friday Golden Time, where they are allowed to choose their own activities as a reward for good work during the week, as an attractive display including a very effective silk painting of fish testifies.
- 80 While leadership and management of the subject is sound overall, aspects of the management remain under-developed. For example, there is no formal assessment of pupils’ work and the co-ordinator is not enabled to monitor the quality of teaching in the subject, or – in a systematic way – the quality of pupils’ work. This reduces her ability to track the development of pupils’ skills and ensure all aspects of the subject are suitably taught. This apart, the subject has improved the position reported by the last inspection and the co-ordinator’s energy and enthusiasm for the subject put it in a good position to improve.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 81 Standards are in line with expectations both for seven-year-olds and for nine-year-olds and have greatly improved since the last inspection, when the subject was deemed to be very under-developed and standards very low. A sensible policy and effective scheme of work have been well implemented and teachers’ expertise in the subject has developed well through intensive training. Consequently, pupils, including those with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and traveller pupils, make good progress. Higher attainers achieve well because the practical tasks set give them scope to use their skills to the full and to evaluate what they have made.
- 82 Teaching and learning are good; at best, they are very good. The projects undertaken are selected because they are interesting and purposeful; for example, Year 3 pupils designed a menu of sandwich snacks for a party and pupils responded with imagination after the teacher told them a story of someone who had peculiar tastes in sandwiches. The topic made good use of pupils’ existing knowledge of healthy eating, linking well with previous science lessons. Pupils in Year 4 embarked on an extended project to design, make and try out a book of pop-up pictures; each week, they will learn a skill to make a different kind of picture until they have produced a book for the younger age group that they have chosen and presented it to them for their comments. They responded with enthusiasm to the challenging way in which the teacher set the task and were very proud of their initial efforts, though not satisfied with them. They behaved well and worked very hard at their task. A stimulating range of projects is undertaken by each year group and

pupils learn to plan for particular purposes, select appropriate materials, practise, make and evaluate an appropriate variety of artefacts during their time in school. Arrangements for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are under-developed and planning is not yet sufficiently based on assessments of what pupils have previously achieved. However, the school is well-placed to continue to make improvements in the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

- 83 Since the last inspection standards in geography remain typical for pupils' ages by the end of Years 2 and 4. Whilst observation was limited and subsequently no judgement on teaching was made, planning and pupils' work show that suitable teaching opportunities are made for geography.
- 84 Both infant and junior pupils, including those who learn English as an additional language and those pupils from travelling families, make satisfactory progress. As a result of planned visits around the locality, younger pupils begin to draw simple maps which show important features and make brief lists of what they would see in the town which is different to what they would see at the seaside. Infant pupils enjoy talking about the travels of Barnaby Bear and have a simple understanding of the world as they track his journeys across the globe. Whilst not quite able to grasp the idea of the aerial map, they work hard to draw a similar map where they recognise what the features represent.
- 85 Junior pupils satisfactorily use evidence from photographs to work out why people have reasons to move out of their area. They transfer some locations from small maps to larger ones appropriately but have difficulty where knowledge of key places is limited. Where worksheets are clear, pupils work hard at clearly identifying the cycle of weather or different climates across the world. Higher attainers illustrated the water cycle effectively in Year 3. Lower attainers do not perform as well where work is insufficiently geared towards their ability. As a result, they make a good start but are often unable to complete their work. However, both younger and older pupils showed a sound sense of direction of north, south, east and west when presented with an outline of the United Kingdom.
- 86 Teachers' stimulating displays clearly capture the interest of pupils. They use flip cards, which clearly reinforce infant pupils' learning about land and buildings in the local area and the resources that were used. Good quality information cards show simple research on the landmarks, capital cities and climates of different areas visited. Teachers plan for recommended geographical experiences but the work in pupils' books suggests that these experiences are not wide ranging. Equally, in class, pupils of all abilities do the same work, which prevents the higher attaining pupils from achieving their personal best. Marking and day to day assessment give the teacher little information on individual achievement in order to plan for the needs of individual pupils.
- 87 As the co-ordinator is fairly new to the post, satisfactory assessment and monitoring procedures are not yet in place. However, a purposeful action plan, discussed with staff, plans to broaden the curriculum and include further opportunities for the use of information and communication technology. The traditional residential visit for older pupils significantly enriches the subject as a lively display shows. Pupils' enthusiasm is evident from the well produced photographs – "The water sports were fantastic!" - "We learnt it's not what you can't do but what you can do". Such activities promote pupils' social development well. The school is well placed to develop the subject.

HISTORY

- 88 Although opportunities to see history lessons were limited, the programme of work shows provision to be suitably interesting and informative about different periods of the past. Attainment in history is below expected levels but both infant and junior pupils make satisfactory progress. Equally, pupils with special educational needs, those who have English as an additional language and pupils from travelling families make satisfactory progress overall. This decline in standards since the last inspection is mainly due to the low levels of literacy and communication skills pupils have when they enter the school and the difficulties pupils encounter in recording as they move through the school.
- 89 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers often begin their lessons with good introductions and describe the purpose of the lesson clearly. As a result, pupils are often good listeners and are well focused for the lesson. Teachers provide banks of words to help pupils increase their historical vocabulary. They use video material to give pupils a good sense of the past and its differences from the present; pupils in Year 3 were astonished at the differences in bathing and the simple domestic equipment people used before the Second World War. Writing is lively and informative where pupils write independently, such as after a visit to the Roman site at Segundum by junior pupils. However, when recording factual knowledge, work is often copied from various sources and there is little independent writing to extend the potential of all groups of pupils fully. Only in few instances do teachers use strategies such as brainstorming, note taking or investigative work. Teachers manage their pupils well and, as a result, pupils present clear, neat work. Nevertheless, some pupils' lack of self-discipline interferes with their productivity and often higher attainers do not fulfil their potential and lower attainers produce very little work. The level of writing skills tends to lower the attainment of all groups of pupils.
- 90 Historical sites within the reach of the locality enrich the subject and teachers make good use of them. The high quality of the display of Roman armour, models and pupil-made artefacts indicated how successful the visit to Segundum had been. Teachers in each year are encouraged to incorporate outside visits in their planning. Past visits have included visits to heritage centres and museums. Resources have been recently upgraded but do not yet contain a wide range of artefacts. As resources from outside are few, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to examine historical sources at first hand. Where possible, however, visitors are invited into school. During the inspection, pupils were able to listen to first hand experiences of the 1930s from a local resident.
- 91 The subject is managed ably by a co-ordinator with good subject knowledge. Policy and planning has been carefully discussed with staff to ensure continuous learning for the pupils. However, the policy is still at the draft stage. The co-ordinator sees short term planning regularly. Whilst some observations of lessons have taken place, overall monitoring is informal. As planning is based upon recommended national guidelines, assessment broadly follows the expectations attached to the guidance given. The school is well placed to improve standards and provision in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 92 Attainment in information and communication technology is at the nationally expected level at the end of both the infant stage and at the age of nine when children leave the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection and is the result of the production and use of a detailed scheme of work, the bringing into use of a properly equipped computer suite and sound teaching throughout the school. A particularly positive contribution to raising standards is the work of the learning support assistants

who do most of the teaching of computer skills in the computer suite. This dovetails well with associated classroom work led by class teachers.

- 93 Pupils make steady progress throughout the school and are well motivated to use the computers. By the age of nine, the great majority of pupils have skills at the expected level when operating a computer and many use the mouse accurately. They collect data by surveying friends and family in order to produce a computer database, which they then convert into graphs or charts. In one topic of this kind, pupils benefited from the sensible use of the computer suite, in small groups, to be taught the necessary skills. This was soon followed by a classroom lesson on the collection of information that was then to be followed by further instruction in the computer suite on how to enter the material into a database. Unlike at the last inspection, many pupils are now adept at modifying the layout and style of their text when word-processing. Higher attaining pupils do this so that the appearance of the piece of writing matches the meaning of the poem or short piece of prose; this enhances pupils' skills in both art and English. The great majority of pupils use art-related software to 'paint' pictures that are attractive and show good control of both the medium and the computer mouse. Most pupils use CD ROMs to access information and they work at the nationally expected level when, for example, developing skills in the use of dictionaries and encyclopaedia. Higher attaining pupils in Year 2 are aware that computers can be used to make things happen through a series of instructions and they identified a washing machine as an example of this. Other aspects of work with programmable robots (a floor turtle) are improving and are close to average. At present, resources are limited so that in a lesson involving twelve pupils, only one robot was available for pupils to work with. However, the adult gave clear and accurate instructions that allowed all pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding. Better access to equipment is needed if pupils are to make the good progress of which they are capable. On a few occasions, some of the lingering consequences of the less satisfactory provision seen at the time of the last inspection can be seen. For example, an otherwise higher attaining, older pupil needed to be reminded of the meaning of 'bold' and a number of pupils struggled with the process of 'dragging' items across the screen using the mouse. Adults are aware of this and wisely stay alert for such gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills, giving additional instruction when needed.
- 94 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress largely because they receive patient and unobtrusive support. Similarly, the small groups using the computer suite are well managed by adults who nearly always ensure that pupils' enthusiasm is well channelled in order that they listen to instructions and so make good progress. All pupils benefit from clear descriptions of what they are going to learn in each lesson and from the adults' accurate use of the specialist language of information and communication technology - with the result that they confidently and accurately use it themselves. Whilst teaching overall is sound for pupils of all ages, there are good aspects, for example, in the way in which pupils of differing levels of attainment are set different learning targets and in the use of simple but expressive language to explain new ideas.
- 95 On occasions, the half an hour allocated to teaching in the computer suite is too short for the work planned to be covered properly and some sessions are rushed. However, the adults' resourcefulness ensures that lessons generally move at a good pace and the work gets covered. An enthusiastic and knowledgeable subject co-ordinator has done valuable work in producing a detailed whole school plan of what is to be learned at each age and stage and this supports teaching and learning well. Too little time has been made available for teaching to be monitored so that strengths can be shared and weaknesses remedied. In view of the school's intention to re-introduce more systematic monitoring of teaching and learning in order to recognise and build on strengths and

tackle weaknesses, the school is well-placed to make the necessary further improvements.

MUSIC

- 96 Standards in music are set to be in line with expectation by the time pupils reach the end of Year 2 and Year 4 and the achievement of pupils at all levels of ability is good.
- 97 Pupils in Years 1 and 2 sing known songs with commitment. They sing rhythmically and in tune, with acceptable intonation and diction. They listen to sounds carefully, identifying and describing them accurately and responding appropriately. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 sing with less commitment, so that their tuning tends to be less than fully accurate, though they maintain a good rhythm. They listen to music and respond to it sensitively. For example, Year 3 pupils, studying Grieg's Peer Gynt suite, listened attentively to 'The death of Ase', correctly identifying what made the music feel sad. When asked to move to the music, they interpreted it well. Year 4 pupils compose short pieces of music in the style under discussion, and most of them accurately follow the beat in the featured music.
- 98 The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers are clear about the objectives of the lessons, and in some cases return to them at the end of the lesson so that pupils can identify how the lesson's intention matches with their experience. They manage the lesson and the pupils well, so that pupils are carried forward at a good pace: this keeps them engaged and attentive. They choose suitable music to study which pupils clearly enjoy and which stimulates their imagination. For example, studying the Grieg resulted in some very graphic representations of the story in an art lesson. Explanation and demonstration is clear, so that pupils follow the theme of the lesson well. Sometimes, however, the music lesson is modest in its expectation, and pupils could achieve more if they were challenged to participate more. At other times, pupils could learn more about the music if the teacher gave them longer to marshal their ideas into words and by doing so clarify their response to it.
- 99 Standards are not as good as they were described to be in the last inspection report. This can at least in part be ascribed to the many changes of teacher experienced by many pupils, which puts a premium on building relationships with pupils rather than on using the relationship to help pupils contemplate and perform music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 100 Standards at the age of nine are in line with the national expectation and this is good progress from the below average attainment at the age of seven. Standards at the age of nine are consistent with those seen at the time of the last inspection, although at the age of seven standards are lower than they were.
- 101 Between the ages of five and nine, pupils make good progress overall, although it is uneven and closely related to the degree to which teaching establishes control of pupils who find it difficult to concentrate and often do not listen carefully enough to instructions.
- 102 Older pupils understand the effect that exercise has on the body and one pupil remarked after a vigorous warm-up, 'These stretches always make me tingle'. Pupils of all ages play games enthusiastically and develop the related skills steadily. By the age of nine, many pupils can throw a ball with reasonable accuracy although they find catching difficult as they do not have the skill of carefully watching the flight of the ball and do not receive it well. In playground games, they show a growing sense of basic tactics. In

gymnastics, for example, when imitating the movement of different kinds of people, the work of younger pupils is half-hearted and below the standard expected. However, by the age of nine, many pupils perform safe and agile rolls, including one-handed cartwheels. Swimming standards are good with the great majority of nine-year-old pupils well on the way to reaching the standard expected of eleven-year-olds.

- 103 Taken overall, teaching is sound and pupils learn at a steady rate. The best standards are reached when teaching is well-planned, with teachers explaining to pupils precisely what they are going to do and learn. In the best lessons, teachers quickly establish control of potentially over-excited pupils and press them hard to keep working and learning. Underpinning this is a system of unobtrusive rewards and sanctions, systematically applied. Some teaching has too few of these characteristics and is unsatisfactory. The absence of systematic monitoring of teaching and learning has not been used to ensure that good practice is spread and weak practice remedied.
- 104 Many physical education lessons last half-an-hour, including changing time. This gives only a short teaching time; on some occasions, the lesson content is sharply focused, the time is used well and progress is good but in others the session has to be rushed in order that the next lesson starts close to the planned time. A small number of pupils regularly forget their kit and sit out the lesson; one games lesson was cancelled because too many pupils had done so. Whilst this is a sensible response to issues of safety, a longer-term solution is needed that ensures that all pupils experience a full physical education curriculum.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 105 The school continues to maintain satisfactory provision overall for religious education based on the locally agreed syllabus and national recommended guidance. Standards for both infant and junior pupils are below expected levels but their progress is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language make satisfactory progress in the subject, as do those pupils from travelling families.
- 106 To some extent, all groups of pupils attain less well because their communication, language and literacy skills are weak at an early stage and the writing skills of junior pupils continue to make recording difficult for most pupils. Equally the planning of the subject lacks breadth. Pupils are aware of the Bible stories they have heard but junior pupils are unsure about the difference between the Old and New Testaments. With prompts, they recall some facts connected with the Hindu faith but are unaware of simple differences between Christianity and the Jewish faith. The subject does not have an established co-ordinator and therefore monitoring and assessment are not active.
- 107 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Infant pupils are given frequent opportunities to rewrite the stories of the Bible which they hear. Clearly these are intended to contribute to their moral development but the majority of pupils often miss the message behind the story. Rewriting supports their writing skills but there is little planning for independent thinking. Equally all pupils do similar work despite their differing abilities and few lower attaining pupils are able to complete their work. Where role-play and good discussion take place, pupils have increased understanding. In lessons for junior pupils, their attention and interest are well caught where, for example, the symbolism of Easter is discussed. Teachers' good subject knowledge is often used to good effect. As a result, pupils' recall of the idea of 'new life' is good and their subject vocabulary is extended. However, in similar lessons with other classes, subject knowledge is not so sharp and methods are mundane so that pupils of all groups make

limited gains in their knowledge. Teachers manage their pupils well, setting the right atmosphere for the content of the lesson and as result most pupils are well behaved and ready to learn, having good attitudes to the subject. Pupils listen carefully and contribute satisfactorily to the discussion. Infant pupils are curious about the different celebrations of Christian and Hindu weddings and ask questions about those who take part. Junior pupils in Year 4 are keen to concentrate on their acrostic poems for Easter and their work showed significant improvement in presentation since the first term. Where pupils concentrate well, both writing and illustration are good and their ideas come through. Higher attaining pupils in Year 3 had caught the idea of the Holy Spirit well when labelling all its different characteristics.