

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **ST STEPHEN'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Longbenton, Newcastle upon Tyne

LEA area: North Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108621

Head teacher: Ms BH Swallow

Reporting inspector: Miss WLR Hunter  
3277

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> April - 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2002

Inspection number: 244659

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bardsey Place Longbenton Newcastle upon Tyne
Postcode:	NE12 8NU
Telephone number:	0191 2007425
Fax number:	0191 2007482
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor E Darke
Date of previous inspection:	May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3277	Miss WLR Hunter	Registered inspector	Mathematics	What sort of school is it?
			Information and communication technology (ICT)	The school's results and pupils' achievements.
			Physical education	How well are pupils and students taught?
			Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage	How well is the school led and managed?
			Special educational needs	What should the school do to improve further?
			Equal opportunities	
9511	Mrs A Longfield	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11611	Mr J Hall	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			Art and design	
			Design and technology	
			Music	
28037	Mrs P Smith	Team inspector	English	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			History	
			Geography	



The inspection contractor was:

Eclipse (Education) Limited  
14 Enterprise House  
Kingsway  
Team Valley  
Gateshead  
NE11 0SR.

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Stephen's RC Primary School serves the parish of Ss Peter and Paul in Longbenton. The school has changed significantly since the last inspection to the point where it is now almost a different school. It has been through a particularly turbulent period where there have been numerous changes to the teaching staff and governors. Additional classroom assistants and part-time staff are now employed and, during this inspection, the deputy head teacher from a local Beacon school was working as the acting deputy head teacher, and teaching in Year 5, until the school appoints its own new deputy head teacher. The immediate area of Longbenton has undergone radical change as part of a local regeneration scheme. Extensive demolition programmes caused school numbers to drop a few years ago but this is now starting to stabilise. There are 194 pupils in the school (94 boys and 100 girls) plus a further 41 children in the nursery for either the morning or the afternoon each day. Over 40 per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals; this is well above the national average. A similar number of pupils have been identified with special educational needs, ranging from emotional and behavioural problems to children with specific learning difficulties. One child has a statement of particular need. The level of special educational need in the school is high and, because of this, it is involved in many projects and initiatives aimed at raising pupils' achievement and self-esteem. There are no pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or for whom English is an additional language. The levels of attainment of many of the children starting in the nursery are low for their age.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This school is improving rapidly having come through a very damaging period since the last inspection. Teaching is now good and pupils are learning well, but a history of ineffective teaching has hit standards hard and is still pulling them down. Pupils' behaviour and relationships are generally very good but, again, a legacy of ineffective classroom management has left some boys with the expectation that they can misbehave and disrupt lessons. The head teacher has led the school excellently and has tried to minimise the damage as governors have tackled difficult issues of staffing and budget problems. The school is now much more stable and is becoming effective. It is still in debt but is providing satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The school wraps children up in an atmosphere of care and love. It provides very well for their moral and social development with the result that pupils have very good attitudes and relationships.
- The nursery is a lively and stimulating place that gives children a great boost and start to their education.
- Teaching is now good and this has dramatically improved the rate of pupils' learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well. The school uses every available opportunity to get additional help and this is having a positive effect on the behaviour and learning of these pupils.
- Standards in physical education are above the levels expected by the end of Year 6.
- The head teacher has provided excellent leadership and steered the school through a very difficult time since the last inspection.

### What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are not high enough by the end of Year 2 or Year 6.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are not high enough by the end of Year 6 and there is insufficient use of ICT in other subjects.
- Teachers need to be more ambitious and challenge the potentially higher ability pupils to do better. Their marking of pupils' work is not as helpful as it should be and gives little support or guidance to show how pupils could improve.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was inspected in May 1997 at which time it was reported to be performing quite well. However, standards dropped significantly in the tests that year and there were many other issues that the school had to deal with, including ineffective teaching in several classes, resistance to change by some key staff, and a large deficit budget. The school was clearly having very serious problems and some pupils were not getting the kind of education they deserved. This has started to change, with the appointment of new staff and governors and with the support and loyalty of a group of committed parents. However, pupils' learning and standards suffered badly during this difficult time and, despite the positive effect of the current teaching, there is still a lot of catching up to do. During the turbulence of the past five years, the head teacher kept the school focused enough to effectively tackle all the points that were identified during the last inspection as well as the other problems going on at the time. The school has made sufficient progress in some areas but standards have suffered. It now has a very secure and effective group of staff and governors that are committed to continuing the rapid improvement and development of the school that has taken place recently.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				<b>Key</b>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	C	C	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E lowest 5% of schools E*
mathematics	B	D	E*	E	
Science	C	D	E	E	

Many of the children in the nursery start with low levels of attainment. They achieve well and many are working at levels typical for their age when they move into the reception class. By the time children are ready to move into Year 1, most have reached the levels expected although some still struggle with poor language and mathematical skills. By the end of Year 2, standards are not high enough in English, mathematics or science but are satisfactory in all other subjects. By the end of Year 6, standards are not high enough in English, mathematics, science or ICT, but are satisfactory in

other subjects and are good in physical education. This is because sport is given a high priority and most pupils extend their skills through the extensive range of extra-curricular clubs.

The school is not performing as well as it should in the national tests, either for seven year olds or 11 year olds. Mathematics results are particularly poor because the National Numeracy Strategy has not been followed by some teachers in the past couple of years. Despite all their efforts, the teachers in Years 2 and 6 had too much work to do to be able to get the results up to the level they wanted. The school's downward trend in its performance is slowly reversing, although results in 2001 do not compare well because this year group had a particularly turbulent and unsettled history. Standards are now improving but the school's predictions and targets still show that results will be low for the next couple of years as the long-term effects of ineffective teaching are tackled. Boys, in particular, are not reaching the levels expected for their ages, and the school is working hard to tackle this. The positive effects of the wide number of initiatives used to support pupils with special educational needs are working and are pulling up the lower end of the spectrum, helping these pupils to do better and, in turn, having a positive impact on standards. However, there are a small number of pupils that have the potential to reach beyond the levels expected for their age, and it is this group of 'more able' pupils that is not being challenged sufficiently well to reach their potential. This is depressing standards and accounts for the school's well below average position when its test results are compared to similar schools.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils have a real sense of belonging and respond well to the efforts of the teachers and other staff. They are enthusiastic about their work and proud of what they achieve.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. When pupils are absolutely clear about the boundaries, their behaviour is very good. Some pupils have got away with poor behaviour in the past and still occasionally try to test this. A small but significant number of boys are immature and attention seeking. Their behaviour is volatile and unpredictable.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are taught to respect themselves and others and are encouraged to mix and work together. A 'buddy' system between Year 6 pupils and reception children is particularly effective and helps to create a sense of family in the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory. This has improved since the last inspection.

Pupils' very positive attitudes and relationships result from the school's commitment to give them a caring and loving environment in which they can feel supported and shielded. The regular work of a school counsellor with both pupils and their parents has a positive effect and helps the children to settle more easily. The behaviour of some boys causes problems but is handled very well, although there were 10 exclusions last year as a 'last resort'.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils in:</b>	<b>Nursery and Reception</b>	<b>Years 1 – 2</b>	<b>Years 3 – 6</b>
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good

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

The school has suffered from ineffective teaching in several classes since the last inspection. This did so much damage that it slowed the rate of pupils' learning and is still having an effect on their standards. There have been significant changes in staff in the past few years. As a result, teaching is now good, and sometimes very good, and pupils' learning has picked up well.

Teaching is very good in several classes in the school but most noticeably in the nursery, where children get a great start to their education, and in Year 6. In Year 6 the very effective teaching has been picking up the pieces and plugging the gaps from ineffective teaching in previous classes, which means that even with the fast rate of learning for the oldest pupils, they do not reach the standards expected for their age. Other pupils in the school are now getting a much better standard of education and are being taught well so the damage limitation effect in Year 6 should soon start to reverse and begin to improve standards as the more effective teaching and learning in other year groups feeds through.

English and mathematics are now taught well and all classes are getting a consistent style of teaching based on the national guidelines for literacy and numeracy. ICT is also being taught well now that the computer suite is working reliably. This is improving pupils' standards in all three subjects across the school. Experienced classroom assistants work alongside teachers in most classes and make a good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly when helping to handle the outbursts of immature and unpredictable behaviour of some boys. Pupils with special educational needs are taught very well and make good gains in their learning. However, teachers do not always make activities as challenging as they could be for the small number of pupils that could work at higher levels. They regularly set targets with the pupils but they do not make sufficient use of these when marking pupils' work to indicate what they have done well, where they could improve, and what they need to do next. This is particularly noticeable for those pupils that could work at higher levels if they knew what to aim for.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad but reflects the school's priorities with high amounts of time given to English, mathematics and ICT.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The school uses many different approaches to identify, intervene and support these pupils. It is particularly successful in raising their self-esteem and in managing the complex emotional needs of some pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school is actively teaching the pupils the skills they need to handle life. Provision for moral and social development is particularly strong and is having a beneficial effect on the relationships in the school and in gradually improving the behaviour of some boys.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The well-being of the pupils is at the heart of everything the school does. This is a massive improvement since the last inspection.

The school has a very good partnership with parents, who hold it in high regard. The standard of pastoral support is excellent and helps to provide an environment in which the pupils are shown how important they are and how much they are cared for, which in turn encourages them to work hard and

learn. The very impressive range of extra-curricular activities makes a strong contribution to pupils' sporting achievements.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Very good. The head teacher's excellent leadership has steered the school through a particularly difficult and damaging phase. She is now supported very well by the senior managers who share her determination and drive for improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors have a clear picture of how the school is performing and why. They have faced difficult decisions regarding staff and have not shirked their responsibilities. They support the school very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Everyone knows precisely what needs to be done to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. Despite having serious difficulties with the budget, the school has a good range of staff and provides additional support for pupils as they need it.

There are sufficient teaching staff for each class plus additional teachers that provide valuable support for pupils with special educational needs. Resources are adequate and there is ample space in the school. Money is spent very carefully. The school is slowly reducing the debt in its budget and the impact of spending is looked at closely to make sure that pupils benefit and get the best value out of any investments made.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school is very welcoming and their children enjoy going there.</li><li>• Teaching is good and their children make good progress.</li><li>• The school is well managed.</li><li>• There is a good range of activities outside lessons.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some were not happy with the arrangements for homework.</li><li>• A few parents felt that they were not kept well enough informed about how their child was doing.</li></ul>

Parents are positive about the school and are right to identify the strengths they did. However, inspectors disagree with parents' criticisms about homework and the information they receive. Homework is used well from nursery right through the school and children get sufficient. The school produces a lot of information for parents and keeps them very well informed.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1 At the time of the last inspection, the school was reported to be doing quite well and to be reaching at least satisfactory standards in all subjects. However, the school's test results, for both seven and 11 year olds, fell sharply immediately following this inspection. This had been predicted by the school and had already been linked to problems of ineffective teaching that had been identified in several classes, which was not made clear in the last inspection report. Although the school's standards have obviously dropped since the position that was stated in the last inspection report, this is not a true picture of the quality and effectiveness of what is happening now. Standards are not high enough but the school knows this, is working hard to rectify the situation and is making good progress in improving its performance.

2 Many children start in the nursery with low levels of attainment. Many are immature, lack social skills and have difficulty with language. They are not used to listening to others and many have little experience of playing or mixing with other children. Because of the very good teaching in the nursery, children learn quickly and achieve well. As a result, many are working at levels typical for their age when they move into the reception class, although a small number of children still have poor language and mathematical skills.

3 Children continue to make reasonably steady progress during their time in the reception class although the teaching here lacks the spark and flair that is present in the nursery. Consequently, by the time children are ready to move into Year 1, most have reached the levels expected although some still struggle with their poor language and mathematical skills. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is satisfactory and they have sound creative and physical skills. Their personal and social development is good and this stems from the atmosphere of care and kindness that permeates the school.

4 By the end of Year 2, standards are not high enough in English, mathematics or science. This is reflected in the school's performance in the national tests for seven year olds in recent years, which shows a downward trend since 1997. Last year, the results for seven year olds were well below the national averages in reading and writing, and were in the lowest 5 per cent of schools for mathematics. The school has had to tackle a difficult problem with the teaching in the infant age range that was not giving pupils the depth or quality of experiences they deserved. This has not only had a dramatic effect on the standards at the end of Year 2 but has also left some of the older pupils with a history of insufficient basic skills in literacy and numeracy. This, in turn, is still impacting on their standards as they move through the school.

5 By the end of Year 2, standards are satisfactory in all other subjects, although pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use ICT to support their work across the curriculum. Pupils' limited literacy skills affect their ability to write at any length in subjects such as history and geography. They struggle to record their ideas and observations in science and this, in turn, pulls their standards down, despite the good practical experiences they are now receiving.

6 By the end of Year 6, standards are not high enough in English, mathematics or science. Again, the school is not performing as well as it should in the national tests for 11 year olds and there has been a distinct downward trend over recent years. Last year, pupils' performance was well below average in English and science, and was in the lowest 5 per cent of schools for mathematics. The

main reason why mathematics was so much weaker was because the National Numeracy Strategy had not been followed by some teachers. In some junior classes, pupils got an inappropriate diet that did not meet the pupils' needs or extend their learning well enough, especially in English and mathematics. This meant that, despite all her efforts, the teacher in Year 6 had too much work to do to be able to get the results up to the level she wanted.

7 There have been significant changes in the teaching staff in the past few years. Teaching is now good, and sometimes very good, and this has accelerated pupils' learning. Pupils are making good progress, albeit from a low starting point in some classes, which means that they are unlikely to be able to make up the ground they lost in the past. Nevertheless, the work of the pupils in the current Years 1, 4, 5 and 6 suggests that the downward trend in the school's performance is slowly reversing. Standards are now improving but the school's predictions and targets still show that the test results for 11 year olds will be low for the next couple of years as the long-term effects of ineffective teaching are tackled. Boys, in particular, are not reaching the levels expected for their ages, and the school is working hard to tackle this. The positive effects of the wide number of initiatives used to support pupils with special educational needs are working well. This is pulling up the lower end of the spectrum, helping these pupils to do better and, in turn, having a positive impact on standards. However, there are a small number of pupils that have the potential to reach beyond the levels expected for their age, and it is this group of 'more able' pupils that is not being challenged sufficiently well to realise this potential. This is depressing standards and accounts for the school's well below average position when its test results are compared to similar schools.

8 By the end of Year 6, standards are not high enough in ICT, but are satisfactory in other subjects and are good in physical education. Standards in ICT have suffered because of frustrating technical problems over recent years, which have caused the school's equipment to be out of action for long periods of time. Pupils have a sound grasp of skills in most areas by the time they reach Year 6 but there have been gaps in their previous learning, such as how to use computers to sense, monitor and control physical events, how to use electronic mail, and how to search and retrieve data. Because the computer suite has only recently become operational again, staff are now focusing on teaching pupils the basic skills they need, but this means that pupils are not getting enough opportunities to use ICT to support their work in other subjects. Standards in physical education are good because sport is given a high priority and most pupils extend their skills through the extensive range of extra-curricular clubs. The school has opted to make swimming a part of its physical education curriculum from Year 4 and this is having a very good effect, with the result that most pupils are swimming well beyond the distance expected by the time they leave the school.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

9 Pupils have very good attitudes to their work and this is a vast improvement since the last inspection. They now know that they are valued and respected. Pupils are taught that their contribution to school life counts and are made to feel important. This has a particularly positive effect on their confidence and self-esteem, and helps them to develop a sense of responsibility. Pupils are benefiting from a greatly improved climate for learning in which all adults have their best interests at heart. Lessons are interesting and the pupils are keen to learn so most of them pay good attention and concentrate well. They apply themselves very well to activities and enjoy sharing their achievements at the end of the lesson. They take pride in their work and feel comfortable enough to make mistakes or give incorrect answers without fear of ridicule.

10 Behaviour has been maintained at a satisfactory level since the last inspection, although there are peaks and troughs, and a small number of pupils go out of their way to test the system and see what they can get away with.

11 Pupils behave very well in and around the school because there are clear boundaries laid down and they know what is expected of them. They follow established routines and know that good behaviour is rewarded and that sanctions are in place should they step out of line. They proudly receive certificates in assembly for good behaviour and play their part in contributing towards class awards. Certificates issued by the lunchtime staff are particularly valued and pupils respond very well in an effort to receive these.

12 Pupils' behaviour during lessons does not always match up to the high levels they show outside classrooms. This is because some of them have got away with unacceptable behaviour in the past and they still try to push and test their teachers. Many of these pupils are emotionally fragile and, as a result, their behaviour is volatile and unpredictable. Some pupils also have special educational needs, which affect their concentration and ability to work sensibly with others. There is a small group of pupils in most classes that can unexpectedly flare and misbehave during lessons; these are mainly boys who are immature and are seeking attention. This challenging behaviour is managed very well by the teachers and classroom assistants, but it does have the effect of slowing the learning for the individual pupils involved. The school has many positive ways of trying to tackle this, including the services of a school counsellor, and uses exclusion as the 'last resort'. Nevertheless, there were 10 exclusions last year, although the incidence has dropped quite noticeably this year.

13 The personal development of pupils is now very good. It starts very well in the nursery and is a direct result of very well planned experiences woven through school life. Pupils listen to and respect the views of others. For example, in a Year 4 literacy lesson, pupils discussed a moral dilemma, decided on what they would do and considered alternative options maturely. Pupils have a strong sense of fairness because they know that they all have the same opportunities to succeed. There are many sporting activities that allow pupils to be competitive, and they respond well to this but not at the expense of 'fair play'.

14 Pupils are friendly and helpful. They willingly accept responsibility to do jobs around the school and are keen to volunteer their help. The 'buddy system' works well and Year 6 pupils readily befriend reception class children to help them settle into the main school building and to enjoy playtime activities. Pupils look forward to their time in Year 6 when they become prefects. They are proud of this responsibility and carry out their duties seriously and conscientiously. This has a very positive impact on behaviour, not only in the playground but also in assembly and around school. The members of the school council meet regularly under the clear leadership of a parent governor. Council members bring pupils' views to the meeting in the knowledge that these are listened to and, where possible, acted upon. This initiative gives pupils a good start to an understanding of democracy and citizenship.

15 The school has very good links with the local community that help pupils to develop an awareness of social responsibility. For instance, by their involvement in the 'Longbenton Spring Clean' and by visiting local elderly people at various times during the year. Pupils actively raise money by their own efforts to help those less fortunate than themselves and are beginning to learn about long-term responsibility. For example, the school has adopted an Indian child and pupils know that they need to raise money to help her each month.

16 Within a Christian family atmosphere pupils are successfully developing very good relationships and laying down the foundations for personal skills to help them in later life. This is something the school does particularly well.

17 Pupils' attendance is satisfactory. It has improved since the last inspection and is now similar to other primary schools. There is no unauthorised absence because of the school's active and

persistent efforts to get parents to provide acceptable reasons for absence, and rates of authorised absence are better than the national picture. Pupils clearly like coming to school. Most pupils are punctual and lessons start and finish on time, which has a good impact on the pupils' learning.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18 The school has suffered from ineffective teaching in several classes since the last inspection. This did a lot of damage. For instance, the National Numeracy Strategy was not put into practice in some classes, with the effect that pupils' learning in mathematics was superficial and insufficient to meet their needs. As a result, standards in mathematics started to slide in both infant and junior aged classes, and the school is still suffering from the legacy of this today. In literacy and science, pupils in some classes were given too many worksheets that limited their opportunities to write and express themselves. Again, this had a detrimental effect on their learning and subsequently affected the standards in both these subjects.

19 There have been significant changes in staff in the past few years. As a result, teaching is now good, and sometimes very good, and pupils' learning has picked up well. The school has successfully turned the corner and is now providing interesting, stimulating and effective lessons for the pupils. However, some classes had such a raw deal in the past that they have too much ground to make up. Although pupils' learning is now good, and they are starting to achieve well, standards are still suffering and are likely to do so for a little while longer.

20 Teaching is very good in the nursery. Here, the children are challenged to succeed and are expected to learn in a fun environment. The teacher and classroom assistants work very well together and know precisely what each child can do and what they need to do next. They plan their lessons very well and identify the key questions, language and facts that they want children to experience each day. For instance, in an activity where children were exploring the features of different fruit and vegetables, the children were prompted to identify 'mushrooms', 'peppers' and to appreciate that 'onions make your eyes water'. Lessons in the nursery maintain a very good balance between adult-directed tasks and free-choice activities that the children select for themselves. In this way, children get regular opportunities to work with an adult and to develop their speaking and listening skills, while also having plenty of time to play and work individually or in small groups where they develop their social skills.

21 The nursery gives children a very good start to their education, to the point that many have made up a lot of ground and are working close to the levels expected for their age when they transfer into the reception class. Teaching in the reception class is satisfactory, and sometimes good, although it lacks the spark and imaginative flair so evident in the nursery. Teaching is good in reception when children are split into groups so that they get focused attention, either from the teacher, the classroom assistant or other adults that often help in this class. For example, in one lesson where some children started to look at symmetrical patterns using mirrors, jigsaws and pictures of butterflies, while others concentrated on putting the stages in the lifecycle of a frog into the right order, then matching this to where the tadpoles in their tank were at the time. Children learn steadily during their time in reception and, consequently, most reach the levels expected in the areas of learning by the time they are ready to move into Year 1.

22 Teaching in the infant classes is good, although this has not always been the case. Teaching in Year 1 is now strong and is starting to kick start pupils' learning. The teacher has a good understanding of what pupils should be achieving and challenges them very well to reach their potential. For example, in an ICT lesson, pupils were told that 'Teddy likes shapes sorted into piles', and were then expected to use their mathematical knowledge of shapes to help them sort and classify the shapes. This led onto an activity where pupils looked at different 'sets' of objects, such as animals, and then started to sort and classify them by 'clicking' and 'dragging' with the mouse. Teaching in Year 2 is calm and controlled, but standards in the current Year 2 class are still suffering because some pupils in this class misbehave and distract themselves and others during lessons. For instance in

a good mathematics lesson, the teacher had to work very hard to hold everyone's attention and to keep them on track. Some boys were particularly immature and spent too much time shouting out and 'telling tales'. Despite this, the teacher managed the class very well to minimise this disruption and to make sure that other pupils' learning did not suffer.

23 Teaching in the junior classes is good, and sometimes very good. Again, teaching has not been consistent across this age range in the past, with the result that the very good teaching in Year 6 could not make up for the ineffective practice elsewhere. Some very good lessons were seen in Years 4, 5 and 6, and this is starting to accelerate pupils' learning. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 5, pupils were constantly challenged by the fast pace of the lesson and the teacher's expectation that they would succeed. Pupils responded well to this and were absolutely clear that, 'the teacher will raise the challenge for us if we under-estimate ourselves'.

24 English and mathematics are now taught well and all classes are getting a consistent style of teaching based on the national guidelines for literacy and numeracy. ICT is also being taught well now that the computer suite is working reliably. This is improving pupils' standards in all three subjects across the school.

25 Experienced classroom assistants work alongside teachers in most classes and make a good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly when helping to handle the outbursts of immature and unpredictable behaviour of some boys. This is particularly helpful in ICT lessons where teachers are still getting to grips with the new equipment, such as the projector, and where pupils need high levels of adult attention.

26 Pupils with special educational needs are taught very well and make good gains in their learning. Again, classroom assistants contribute well here during lessons, but some pupils are also withdrawn for specific support from part-time teachers. The quality of this teaching is very good. Pupils are made to feel important by the focused attention and are given work that is matched carefully to their needs and abilities. In this way, they are encouraged to make small, but often significant, steps in the learning and to take pride in their achievements.

27 The level of special educational need in the school is high and, because of this, teachers tend to focus on making sure that these pupils are being supported effectively. However, they do not always make activities as challenging as they could be for the small number of 'more able' pupils that could work at higher levels. They regularly set targets with the pupils but they do not make sufficient use of these when marking pupils' work to indicate what they have done well, where they could improve, and what they need to do next. This is particularly noticeable for those pupils that could work at higher levels if they knew what to aim for.

28 The quality of teaching in the school has improved dramatically since the last inspection. Teaching is now effective and this, in turn, is giving pupils a better quality of education and sufficient opportunities to make progress in their learning.

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

29 Children in the nursery and reception class get a broad range of experiences that give them plenty of opportunities in all the recommended areas of learning. The nursery curriculum is particularly good because children are encouraged to learn through practical 'play' activities, such as working in the local garden centre. This stimulating start helps children to settle and to gain ground quickly from a low starting point.

30 The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of its pupils. Each subject now has a policy and scheme of work, which resolves the weakness identified in the last inspection. Although a significant amount of time is spent teaching English, mathematics and ICT, this is very relevant to the needs of pupils at the current time, and the balance of time spent on all other subjects is therefore satisfactory. The school is starting to provide pupils with the relevant skills in ICT by teaching them in the computer suite, but there are still insufficient opportunities for pupils to use these skills to support and enhance their learning in other subjects.

31 All teachers take account of the guidelines of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and these have now been implemented successfully throughout the school. This has not always been the case and it was one of the major factors contributing to ineffective teaching and the school's subsequent downward slide in standards in recent years. However, a consistency in approach has now been established and this is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning in English and mathematics.

32 The school provides very well for pupils with special educational needs under the careful and efficient direction of the co-ordinator. The inclusion of these pupils has a very high priority in the school, and the substantial amount of extra support and careful monitoring of these pupils contributes much to their learning and social development. The school is actively involved in initiatives that help to provide these pupils with experiences to support their particular needs. For instance, some pupils are receiving extra support where they use a computer package to develop their numeracy skills, while others have taken part in a speech, language and communication difficulties project aimed at providing early intervention to remedy their language impairment. These are all very effective and are helping these pupils to develop their basic skills well. However, the specific emphasis and focus on pupils with special educational needs has meant that the small number of 'more able' pupils in the school are not being challenged as well as they could be.

33 There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including clubs for art, library and Irish dancing. A breakfast club and homework club provide pupils with comfortable, caring environments in which they can develop both their social and learning skills. The many sports clubs run by the school contribute significantly to pupils' social development and to the high standards in physical education. Similarly, pupils' learning in music is supported well through a wide variety of musical activities, events and productions.

34 The school is part of the local regeneration scheme and gets a great deal of help from the local community to improve pupils' learning. For example, a community police officer visits the school regularly promoting awareness of issues such as drug misuse and the danger of talking to strangers. He encourages pupils to talk about any problems that they might have and provides a good source of external support for the school. There is very good support from the local church, providing help with reading and fund raising, and the parish priest regularly visits the school to talk to staff and pupils. Many parents come into the school to help by working alongside the teachers and other staff and, in so doing, provide very valuable assistance. For instance, they help in lessons, support extra-curricular activities and oversee the school's pupil council. There is also a good partnership with the comprehensive school, which helps older pupils to be more at ease when they transfer there. An example is the science curriculum extension programme, where pupils visit the comprehensive school for lessons and a science teacher comes into school to teach pupils in Years 5 and 6 in their own classroom. All these activities help pupils to appreciate that the school is part of the local community and that they, in turn, have a role to play as local citizens.

35 The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. The governing body has approved policies for sex education and an awareness of drug misuse and these are incorporated effectively into teaching and learning. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and moral development is a major strength of the school and has a very positive impact on the very good attitudes of pupils, their values and their personal development. The very good moral provision has successfully maintained the standard of behaviour in the school apart from a small but significant number of pupils whose behavioural problems are more deep rooted.

36 The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual development. Christian values and beliefs guide the work of the school. There is an aura of love and care throughout the school that gives pupils the security they need to express their own thoughts and ideas, without feeling ashamed or foolish. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on they have learned in lessons and to share their views and opinions. For instance, pupils in Year 2 responded with sheer delight when they connected a simple circuit and the buzzer sounded. In history, Year 4 pupils imagined what it would be like to be a wartime evacuee, and stated: "I am lonely and scared, and I don't know anyone here." Pupils think about the imagery in literature and successfully interpret what it means to them. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on the mood of music, and well-chosen pieces are used as an introduction to assemblies. Assemblies have a particularly high profile in the school because numerous parents join staff and pupils in a meaningful act of worship each day. Pupils respectfully pray together at various times of the day and they often share their own personal prayers with each other. The school is constantly seeking new ways of supporting pupils' development. For example, a new sensory garden is soon to be established and this will further enrich its spiritual provision.

37 Pupils' moral and social development are promoted very well. Various projects and initiatives have been thoughtfully planned to support good behaviour and manage challenging behaviour. Lessons and well-planned class discussions provide opportunities for pupils to discuss moral issues. Fables, environmental issues, and the moral stand made by characters in books and famous people in history, all effectively promote pupils' moral development. One of the aims of the school is 'to encourage the development of positive attitudes such as respect, tolerance and concern for others', and teachers plan very good opportunities to successfully meet this aim. Their organisation of lessons effectively encourages pupils to work together amicably and to share opinions and ideas. The wide-ranging after school clubs encourage pupils to share leisure time activities with their friends. Teachers organise events to help the local community and encourage pupils to develop a sense of social responsibility. New initiatives are very well planned in advance. For instance before the first school council took office, pupils visited the Mayor and the Council Offices to see the 'big picture' of democracy in action so that they had better understanding of citizenship.

38 The school makes good provision for pupils' cultural development by promoting an interest in good quality literature written for children and planning work to allow pupils to learn of other cultures and traditions, such as the Chinese New Year. Once a term, teachers plan a project that involves the study of a major world faith and this expands pupils' knowledge of other cultures and their beliefs. Pupils are aware of their own culture through work in history, music and a local study in geography. They develop an appreciation of famous artists, both past and present, and have the opportunity to work with an artist in residence to prepare for the local festival. The curriculum is effectively enriched by visits to the theatre, art galleries and other places of interest.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

39 The school makes excellent provision for the health, safety and well-being of its pupils. Their sense of belonging is at the heart of the school and all its work. This is an improvement since the last inspection and underpins the very good relationships and the positive climate for learning that now exist in the school. Pupils are shown how important they are and how much they are cared for, which in turn encourages them to work hard and learn.

40 The head teacher takes the lead in setting the ethos of care, order and structure that is clearly valued by the parents, who recognise the school's strength in its pastoral care. Teaching and non-teaching staff support her well and implement the school's policies and procedures effectively. Arrangements for child protection are very good and this is a particular improvement since the last inspection. All staff are now aware of their responsibilities and are alert and vigilant. Appropriate

health and safety measures and procedures are in place, regular risk assessments are undertaken, and there are good arrangements for administering first aid and dealing with accidents and sickness.

41 The support for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school uses many different approaches to identify, intervene and support these pupils, and contact with outside specialists ensures the additional help is available when needed. For example, there are strong links with the educational psychologist and speech therapist, both of which have contributed to programmes of work in the school. The school also benefits from the support given by the weekly visits of a pastoral support worker, who offers a counselling service to both pupils and parents.

42 The school is committed to promoting and improving pupils' behaviour, and has put a good range of systems in place. Pupils, staff and parents know the rules and sanctions and parents are informed of any instances of their child's inappropriate behaviour. Bullying or oppressive behaviour will not be tolerated and are dealt with promptly and effectively. Teachers regularly praise pupils for their response and behaviour during lessons, and pupils value the merits given when they 'score a goal' towards their targets. Lunchtime supervisors make a particularly good contribution to the school's procedures by giving their own awards for behaviour each week.

43 Procedures to monitor attendance are satisfactory. The school has improved its arrangements for registration, since the last inspection, by moving from a system of manual registers to a computerised system of recording pupils' attendance. The school works in close partnership with the educational welfare officer to contact families when any pupils' attendance or punctuality gives cause for concern. Consequently, rates of attendance have also improved.

44 The school has very good procedures in place for monitoring pupils' personal and academic progress, but these tend to produce a lot of paperwork and they do not always have a tangible impact on what is happening in the classroom. The children are assessed when they start in the nursery and there are continuous assessments made throughout the year. Pupils are assessed on their work in English and mathematics and these assessments are used to set targets at the end of the school year. These targets are discussed with the pupils and their parents, but they are not used as well as they could be when teachers mark pupils' work. Consequently, pupils do not always have a clear idea of what they do well or what they need to do next to improve their work.

45 The head teacher and subject managers carry out a detailed analysis of the results of national and other tests, and use this to identify strengths and weaknesses in the teaching of English, mathematics and science. This has been particularly important against the backdrop of declining standards in recent years. It has placed the school in a strong position to understand precisely why standards have fallen and what needs to be done to improve them.

46 The teachers and classroom assistants know the pupils very well. They have a very good knowledge and understanding of the needs of each individual pupil and are alert and responsive if they feel there is something wrong. The pupils who have specific problems or emotional needs know that all staff will support them sensitively. This strong 'family' feeling is a key characteristic of the school and its success in meeting the personal needs of its pupils.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

47 The school has a very good partnership with parents. Parents are involved in many ways and make an effective contribution to the life and work of the school. A large number of parents and friends regularly help in the classrooms, escort pupils to swimming and accompany them on educational visits. A number of parents have received training to become classroom support assistants and now work in the school. The very active Parents' and Teachers' Association has raised considerable sums of money that are used to improve pupils' learning, for instance by supporting the new sensory garden and buying equipment for the computer suite.

48 Parents think highly of the school. They feel that the school is well led and managed and agree that they feel comfortable in approaching the school with problems or questions. Parents also consider the teaching to be good and believe that their children are making good progress. A key strength, as far as parents are concerned, is the range of activities that take place outside lessons. Parents are confident that their children like coming to school and are happy. Parents are right to hold these views and this shows that they have a good knowledge and understanding of how the school is doing. On the other hand, a small number of parents feel that arrangements for homework could be better and that they are not kept well enough informed about how their child is getting on. Inspection evidence disagrees with these criticisms. Homework is used well from nursery right through the school and children get sufficient. Similarly, the school produces a lot of information for parents and keeps them very well informed throughout the year.

49 The school encourages personal contact with parents. For instance, parents are welcomed into the nursery at the start and end of each session, and are invited to talk about their child's development. Parents value the opportunities to discuss any issues or concerns with staff immediately after school and at the termly consultation evenings, and they are regular visitors to support the school assemblies.

50 The quality of information that parents receive about the school and its curriculum is good. There is an excellent prospectus, which presents key information in a straightforward manner. Parents are kept up to date with school affairs through the twice weekly newsletters and the governors' annual report gives a clear picture of school life in the preceding year. The annual progress reports written by class teachers meet statutory requirements and give parents sufficient information, although the quality of some teachers' comments last year were a bit too superficial.

51 Parents are an integral part of the school's extended 'family'. They make a very good contribution to the work and have a positive impact on the range and quality of experiences offered to the pupils. The involvement and effectiveness of the school's partnership with parents has improved considerably since the last inspection.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

52 The head teacher had been in post for three weeks at the time of the last inspection. Her excellent leadership has steered the school through a difficult and damaging period since then. With the support of parents, governors and most staff, she set a clear agenda for what needed to change and did not falter in her resolve to make this happen. She managed this situation extremely well. As a result, despite difficult staffing issues and problems with the budget, the school has come through the worst and is now in a position where teaching is effective and pupils' learning is secure.

53 The head teacher is supported well by the current senior management team. The school is without a deputy head teacher, at present, but is receiving very good support from the deputy of a local Beacon School. This support has been a source of great strength and encouragement for the head teacher, and has helped to stabilise the management situation well. Other members of the senior management team all share the head teacher's thirst and drive for improvement and are committed to taking the school forward and raising standards. Consequently, the school has very good capacity to continue on the road of further improvement.

54 The roles of curriculum managers have been clarified and strengthened since the last inspection and this is working particularly well in the school's priority areas of English, mathematics and ICT. In these subjects, the managers actively monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the

school and have responsibility for drawing up action plans to tackle deficiencies and to raise standards. In other areas of the curriculum, managers carry similar responsibilities but accept that their subjects have not had the same high profile and will therefore develop over a longer period of time.

55 The governing body supports the school very well. Governors are kept very well informed, by the head teacher, and have a clear picture of how the school is performing and why. They have faced difficult decisions regarding staff and have not shirked their responsibilities. Governors have therefore been instrumental in shaping the school and in setting the tone for future improvement. The school has had a deficit budget for several years and this has limited governors' opportunities for development, as they have had to work hard to reduce the level of debt. Nevertheless, governors have managed the school's finances prudently and have made careful investments in key areas to benefit the pupils, such as the purchase of additional ICT equipment for the computer suite and the erection of a corridor between the infant and junior buildings.

56 Staffing levels are good. After a period of significant staff changes since the last inspection, the situation is now much more stable with a good balance of age and experience among the teachers and a much greater level of support from qualified classroom assistants and other helpers. The school also benefits from additional part-time teachers that support pupils with special educational needs. However, the school went through a particularly turbulent phase where several classes had temporary teachers for considerable lengths of time. This affected the continuity, and in some cases the quality, of pupils' learning and contributed to the slide in standards.

57 Accommodation is good. There is plenty of space, including sufficient classrooms to provide dedicated teaching areas for special educational needs groups and ICT. The school also benefits from large playing fields and two halls. Accommodation in the nursery is very good and allows working areas to be set up to stimulate and interest the children. The outdoor play area for the nursery and reception children has benefited from financial support from parents and now provides a bright and attractive place for children to play and develop their physical skills.

58 The school has sufficient resources to support pupils' learning in most subjects. There is a very good range of equipment for physical education, especially games, which helps to give the pupils a broad choice of sporting activities. There are sufficient computers in the computer suite for a whole class to be taught together but there are few machines elsewhere in the school. This limits pupils' opportunities to use ICT to support their work in other subjects, and is compounded by the fact that the school has little software to use.

59 The school is part of a local regeneration scheme and therefore benefits from additional sources of support. The head teacher makes sure that every possible opportunity is seized for the benefit of the pupils. For instance, a part-time counsellor provides valuable input to the school's pastoral systems and the school has successfully taken part in early intervention projects with the local authority's speech and language service. The very effective leadership and management by the head teacher, supported by the strong governing body and developing senior management team puts the school in a good position to make further improvements and realise its goal of raising standards.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60 The school should now:

A. Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by:

- continuing to monitor teaching and learning to make sure that literacy and numeracy are taught effectively in all classes;
- setting targets that challenge teachers and pupils to strive for higher performance in the national tests;
- making sure that activities are carefully matched to the needs of the potentially higher ability pupils;
- encouraging pupils to apply their mechanical knowledge of mathematics to solve problems and to explain their working;
- putting a greater emphasis on practical and investigative work in science;
- giving pupils greater freedom to record the results of their science work in different ways.

Ref: paragraph numbers - 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 18, 27, 76, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 86, 88, 89, 91, 92, 93 and 95.

B. Raise standards in ICT by the end of Year 6, by:

- giving pupils sufficient opportunities to use the Internet and electronic mail;
- giving pupils experience of using computers to monitor, sense and control the physical environment;
- making more use of ICT to support pupils' work in other areas of the curriculum, especially literacy, mathematics and science.

Ref: paragraph numbers - 5, 8, 30, 58, 90, 96, 108, 109 and 112.

C. Improve the rate of pupils' learning by:

- raising teachers' expectations of what the 'more able' pupils could potentially achieve;
- providing these pupils with more challenging activities rather than expecting them to complete the same task as others at a faster rate before moving on to additional tasks;
- setting high and challenging targets for these pupils to aim for in all areas of their work;
- making sure that teachers' marking links to the targets set for all pupils and provides helpful feedback to pupils on what they do well and where they need to improve;
- giving all pupils a better understanding of their own learning and a clear idea of what they need to do to get better.

Ref: paragraph numbers - 7, 27, 32, 44, 78, 89, 91 and 95.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	12	15	13	0	0	0
Percentage	0	29	37	32	0	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 two percentage points.*

### *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)	41	194
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	82

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	15	67

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

### *Attendance*

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

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	-	13	23

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	12	11
	Total	17	19	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	74% (83%)	83% (80%)	70% (80%)
	National	84% (83%)	86% (84%)	91% (90%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	11	-
	Total	16	16	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	70% (80%)	70% (80%)	70% (80%)
	Total	85% (84%)	89% (88%)	89% (88%)

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

*Where the number of boys or girls is 10 or less, figures are omitted.*

### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	11	14	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	12
	Total	12	11	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	46% (79%)	42% (66%)	73% (83%)
	National	75% (75%)	71% (72%)	87% (85%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	11
	Total	13	11	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	50% (69%)	42% (76%)	62% (82%)
	National	72% (70%)	74% (72%)	82% (79%)

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

*Where the number of boys or girls is 10 or less, figures are omitted.*

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	194
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	9	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.6
Average class size	27.8

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	82.5

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	41
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	27.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000 – 2001
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	£
Total income	425,699
Total expenditure	449,339
Expenditure per pupil	2,130
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 3,061
Balance carried forward to next year	- 26,701

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.0

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.0
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	194
Number of questionnaires returned	62

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	27	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	33	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	45	3	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45	35	18	0	2
The teaching is good.	64	34	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	39	5	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	23	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	27	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	55	42	2	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	71	27	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	34	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	66	27	2	0	5

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

61 Children start in the nursery with low levels of attainment. Many are immature, lack social skills and have difficulty with language. Because of the very good teaching in the nursery, children learn quickly and achieve well. As a result, many are working at levels typical for their age when they move into the reception class, although a small number of children still have poor language and mathematical skills. Children continue to make reasonably steady progress during their time in the reception class. Consequently, by the time children are ready to move into Year 1, most have reached the levels expected although some still struggle with their poor language and mathematical skills. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is satisfactory and they have sound creative and physical skills. Their personal and social development is good and this stems from the atmosphere of care and kindness that permeates the school.

62 The nursery is a lively and stimulating place that gives children a great boost and start to their education. The nursery curriculum is particularly good because children are encouraged to learn through practical 'play' activities, such as working in the local garden centre. This stimulating start helps children to settle and to gain ground quickly from a low starting point. The curriculum for children in the reception class is planned carefully to build on these previous experiences and to make sure that children are given plenty of opportunities in all the recommended areas of learning. The 'foundation stage' is managed effectively and is fully integrated into the life of the school. For instance, children are expected to start taking homework and are given opportunities to be part of extra-curricular clubs, such as the 'early years' football club.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

63 This area of learning is taught very well and, as a result, children develop good personal and social skills. By the time they are ready to move into Year 1, most pupils are working at the levels expected for their age.

64 In the nursery, children are encouraged to work and play together and to mix socially. For instance, when 'working' in the 'garden centre' or when sharing their time outside on the large climbing frame and using outdoor toys. Adults in the nursery provide activities that spark children's curiosity and, in turn, encourage them to want to explore new experiences for themselves. For example, when children were presented with a display of fruit and vegetables (donated by staff and parents) their interest was aroused and there was great curiosity and excitement as they started to investigate the difference between the mushrooms, peppers and onions. Routines are well established in the nursery and children are expected to start taking some responsibility for themselves. For example, they clear up at the end of activities and put equipment away, such as hanging up the tools in the garden centre by matching their shapes to the silhouettes on the wall. 'Circle' time, in both the nursery and reception class, gives children time to think and talk about their thoughts and feelings. They take part in games to help them bond with each other and their teachers and classroom assistants, and learn to listen to each other and take turns speaking about themselves. Children are rewarded for their kindness and manners. For example, a 'friends tree' in the nursery has their names pinned to leaves to acknowledge their acts of friendship towards each other, and children are proud to point out their names.

65 In the reception class, children are taught in a slightly more formal atmosphere, especially for literacy and numeracy activities, but are still given plenty of opportunities to work independently and to

develop their personal skills. For example, they know that they have to take the coloured ‘pendants’ off their hooks if they want to work in the sand, water or leave the classroom during a lesson. Children in reception are very proud of their ‘buddies’ in Year 6, who help to look after them in the playground, and look up to them for support and guidance. Lessons in the reception class often involve children working together in groups, and they respond well to this. For instance, when helping each other to look at symmetrical patterns in mirrors or when working together moulding dough to make ‘food’ for the ‘very hungry caterpillar’.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

66 This area of learning is taught very well. As result, children make rapid leaps in their learning in the nursery, from a low starting point. By the time they are ready to move into Year 1, most pupils are working at the levels expected for their age, although some still struggle with poor speech and language skills.

67 In the nursery, children are exposed to plenty of opportunities to develop their communication skills. They are encouraged to talk and listen, to each other and to different adults, and to take part in discussions about their work. Children enjoy listening to a variety of spoken language, such as stories, rhymes and songs, and learn to follow simple instructions. They are taught to concentrate and listen carefully to stories, and are encouraged to talk about the events, characters and to share their own ideas, which they do well. Children meet a rich and interesting range of language and are encouraged to ‘find things out’ for themselves. For example, in the quiet reading corner, children had plenty of books available to help them answer the challenging question of “how does a caterpillar make a cocoon?” and a lending library encourages parents to take books home to share with their child. Carefully planned lessons give children the chance to develop their early writing skills, which they then practice in imaginative play settings, such as the ‘office’ where there are message boards and notepads for taking telephone messages. Children have access to the computer suite and start to ‘type’ their own stories and develop basic word-processing skills. The wide range of experiences offered in the nursery, and the very good quality of interaction between the adults and children, means that children learn quickly and make up good ground before they go into reception.

68 In the reception class, children continue to make steady progress in developing their speaking, listening and reading skills, and make good progress in their writing. They share an enthusiasm for stories and begin to recognise initial letters, the sounds made by combinations of letters and to read simple words. Children start by writing their own name but quickly move on to writing simple words, using correctly formed letters. They are taught the importance of handwriting and, by the end of their time in reception, some children are actually beginning to join their letters together. Children are encouraged to write for different reasons, such as stories about ‘the tiger that came to tea’, or about the changes taking place in the class tadpoles as they start to turn into frogs. Children read regularly and are encouraged to take books home. Some children have particular difficulties with their speech and language, and these are picked up early. The school has very good links with the educational psychologist and speech therapist, and children’s needs are therefore diagnosed and supported effectively from an early age.

### **Mathematical development**

69 This area of learning is taught well. Again, children make rapid leaps in their learning in the nursery, from a low starting point. By the time they are ready to move into Year 1, most pupils are working at the levels expected for their age, although some still have little understanding of numbers.

70 In the nursery, there are plenty of objects to stimulate and remind children about shapes, numbers and colours. For example, hanging mobiles with numbers and mathematical symbols, games and puzzles are readily available. Soft toys are also used very well to encourage children to take an interest in mathematics, such as the 'counting frog' to help them count the plastic sunflowers in plantpots around the nursery. Children are taught to distinguish between 'tall', 'short', 'light' and 'heavy' objects, and enjoy working practically to investigate these concepts. For instance, when building towers and counting to 16, some children realised that this would be a 'tall' tower, while others discovered that a bag of leeks was 'heavier' than a bag of spring onions. Activities throughout the nursery are designed to reinforce children's mathematical development. For example, the role-play area (set up as a garden centre) encourages them to browse the items on display and in catalogues and 'buy' them for plastic money, such as 8p for a garden spade or 20p for a wheelbarrow.

71 In the reception class, mathematics is taught soundly and children make steady progress in this area of learning. They still get plenty of opportunities to explore and investigate for themselves, but this tends to be more tightly directed by the teacher and classroom assistants. For instance, when looking at different items of food, children had to be carefully prompted to discover that a chunk of salami was not symmetrical while there were 'several places' they could put the mirror on an orange and still 'keep it the same on both sides'. Large displays around the classroom reinforce children's knowledge of numbers up to 20 and the sequence of the days in the week, and water and sand activities help to develop their understanding of shape, space and weight.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

72 This area of learning is taught very well in the nursery. Children are given practical experiences to learn about the world around them and to explore and investigate for themselves. For example, they have explored their sense of touch by finding out how different materials, such as dough and spaghetti, 'feel' and by trying to find words that describe this. Children have looked at different seeds under a magnifying glass and then planted them to see what happens. They already have a good idea that they need water and light to grow. This work was linked well to a visit to a local garden centre, which has provided a great source of interest and stimulation for imaginative role-play in the nursery. Children learn about their local area by visits, by looking at photographs and by talking about places and people of interest. For example, they are particularly keen to go to a local pond to release their tadpoles when they turn into frogs. They are also fascinated by the current building work taking place at the school and copy ideas from this when playing outdoors, such as 'building' walls with large wooden bricks.

73 This area of learning is taught soundly in the reception class. Visitors, such as a nurse, secretary, lollipop lady and local refuse collectors, make a good contribution to help children learn about life outside their home and school. Children begin to realise that changes take place as time passes. For instance, they have looked at photographs of themselves as babies and compared how they look today. They are also carefully watching what happens to some tadpoles as they evolve through their lifecycle and turn into frogs. Children have taken part in a project where they have planted seeds and bulbs, but there is little stimulus in the classroom to support this work. Children are taught basic scientific facts, for example to recognise the parts of the eye and the features of different animals, and know about the weather, here and abroad. By the time they are ready to move into Year 1, most children have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

### **Physical development**

74 This area of learning is taught very well in the nursery. Children have access to a well organised outdoor play area that is used daily. They have plenty of physical experiences, such as

climbing, running and moving on wheeled bikes and scooters. Practical activities in art and construction provide them with opportunities to develop their finer skills, such as cutting, sticking, controlling a brush and balancing bricks and blocks on top of each other. This area of learning is taught well in the reception class. Children are given time, each day, in the nursery outdoor area as well as more formally taught physical education lessons. They are taught to catch and throw balls and ban bags, to roll hoops and to skip with a rope. Children continue to develop their skills of cutting with scissors and pasting with glue, by making two-dimensional pictures and collages and three-dimensional models. By the time they are ready to move into Year 1, children have satisfactory physical skills.

## **Creative development**

75 This area of learning is taught very well in the nursery. Children are encouraged to explore for themselves and to express their own ideas creatively. For instance, by making folding patterns to represent butterflies, by printing patterns with fruit and vegetables, and by painting pictures of their favourite animals. Children work with 'junk' materials (such as cereal boxes and egg cartons) to make models and explore different textures using felt, tissue paper, sequins and wool to decorate them. The nursery curriculum offers plenty of scope for creative work in music and children thoroughly enjoy handling instruments and exploring the different sounds they make. They sing enthusiastically. This area of learning is taught soundly in the reception class. Children are given sufficient opportunities to paint, build models and work with a range of materials. They take part in hymn practice with infant pupils and begin to learn songs and rhymes. Children use ICT to create colourful pictures, for example of the big yellow truck that comes to empty the rubbish bins from the school kitchen. By the time they are ready to move into Year 1, children have satisfactory creative skills.

## **ENGLISH**

76 By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards in English are below the levels expected for seven and 11 year olds. Standards are lower than in the last inspection. This is mainly due to the difficult journey that many pupils have faced during the last four years because of the school's precarious staffing situation and a high incidence of ineffective teaching. As a result, standards immediately after the last inspection fell dramatically. Although there have been fluctuations since that time, the school's test performance last year fell to well below the national average. The school has now emerged out of this difficult period but the improved quality of teaching and subject management has had insufficient time to make a more positive impact on standards.

77 In English there is a noticeable difference between the performance of girls and boys. Girls perform much better even though all pupils are treated fairly and given the same opportunities in every aspect of school life. However, there is a very high proportion of boys on the special educational needs register and, in some lessons, a small but significant number of boys display attention seeking behaviour that hampers their learning.

78 Standards are further depressed because of the number of pupils of lower ability who reach below average standards far outweighing the number of pupils who reach higher standards. Teachers use very good methods to assess pupils' attainment. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early and, as a result, teachers plan very focused activities to help them to learn well. These pupils make good progress in small steps to meet their learning targets. Opportunities are missed, however, to more precisely identify those pupils who have the potential to reach above average standards, and to give them the same opportunity to succeed through a much more challenging curriculum.

79 Despite a systematic approach to teaching, pupils' speaking and listening skills are below average. Standards are depressed because of the larger than average number of pupils who have problems in sustaining concentration for long periods of time. They are reluctant to speak in discussion and teachers work skilfully to encourage them to participate. These lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, have limited vocabulary and speak in words and phrases rather than in sentences. Other pupils express their ideas clearly and thoughtfully at a level more typical of their age group. For instance, Year 4 pupils were engrossed as they listened to an expressively read story then, as a result of the teacher's very skilful questioning, they answered questions confidently and showed a deep understanding of the main points of the discussion.

80 Reading is taught well throughout the school and standards are improving rapidly. Teachers work closely with classroom assistants and part-time specialist support staff to give additional help to pupils at the appropriate level. Parents support pupils at home and maintain a useful dialogue with teachers through the reading record books. Pupils get experience of a wide variety of books and make good progress. Year 2 pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of how to use a reference book, and many are able to find the information they need by using an index. Pupils read confidently and fluently. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to give the 'more able' pupils a more challenging text to stretch them further. Most pupils use a variety of methods to help them to read unfamiliar words but they do not always check the meaning if they are unsure. The most able pupils in Year 6 actually read quite well. They read with expression, accuracy and fluency and have developed an enthusiasm for literature.

81 Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to write in a variety of styles. Infant pupils are growing in confidence as independent writers and, by the time they are in Year 2, pupils' ideas are starting to flow appropriately from one sentence to the next. Teachers work hard to remind pupils to use capital letters, commas and full stops but few pupils punctuate their sentences correctly. This pattern follows through into the juniors where many pupils are still insecure in their use of punctuation. By the time they are in Year 6, some pupils write well. They engage the reader's interest immediately because their writing is interesting and well organised. For instance, they set the scene with very well chosen vocabulary such as, "The moonlight flooded through the cobwebbed windows". However, other pupils struggle to express their ideas because of limited vocabulary and weak spelling.

82 Spelling is systematically taught throughout the school. This has not always been the case, however, and in the past pupils have all been given the same spellings regardless of their ability. Current staff are working hard to allow pupils to catch up. Handwriting is taught very well. This starts in the infant classes and, by the end of Year 2, the majority of pupils are producing handwriting that is joined and legible. Throughout the school pupils take a pride in the presentation of their work.

83 Teaching is good. The teachers all have a thorough grasp of the National Literacy Strategy and are implementing it effectively in their classes. This has not always been the case and is one reason why standards have suffered in recent years. Teachers now teach basic skills very well in a step-by-step way building on what pupils know already. They constantly check that pupils have understood previous learning before moving on to new work. Teachers plan meaningful activities to capture the interest of pupils and motivate them to learn. For example, the teacher in Year 1 made learning fun with a brisk class spelling game. Pupils were eager and enthusiastic and, as a result, made good progress in both the spelling and definition of simple words. Teachers also use the session at the end of the lesson well to share ideas and extend thinking. For instance, Year 4 pupils worked in pairs very productively and were keen to share their views with the rest of the class about how they would have handled the moral issue of 'Danny's Dilemma'. The teacher then explained that they had

been ‘empathising’ with the character and this made the terminology very meaningful to pupils. Homework is relevant and effectively extends and supports classroom activities.

84 The school is making very good use of a part-time teacher to allow the current Year 6 class to be split into smaller groups for English. This is particularly effective because it allows pupils to have more focused teaching in line with their ability. For instance, the class teacher was able to conduct a lesson at a very brisk pace and pitch it to focus on the needs of the average and ‘more able’ pupils in order to extend their vocabulary, and use of alliteration, metaphor and personification to illustrate their answers. At the same time, lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs were withdrawn to work in a small group, and they developed a deep understanding of a poem, and the connectives used, because of the very good support they received. This approach to teaching in Year 6 is having a beneficial effect and is improving standards across the board.

85 The subject is well led. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The manager has a good understanding of the strength of the subject and has a clear picture of what needs to be further developed. She monitors planning, samples work and observes the quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms. She and her colleagues have a shared commitment to raise standards and they are now well placed to succeed.

## **MATHEMATICS**

86 By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards in mathematics are much lower than they should be for seven and 11 year olds. This is because some classes have not had teaching based sufficiently closely on the guidance in the National Numeracy Strategy for several years. As a result, pupils have learnt to calculate mechanically but they struggle to apply this knowledge to solve problems and have little understanding of different ways in which to tackle mathematical questions. In the national tests last year, this showed when the school’s results were so poor that it was in the lowest 5 per cent of schools. Since then standards have improved because the teaching is now much better, but it will still take time to bring standards back up to where they should be.

87 All teachers are paying careful attention to the guidance in the National Numeracy Strategy and are using this to help plan and support their lessons. This consistent approach has been supported by effective monitoring of the teaching by the head teacher and subject manager. As a result, mathematics is now taught well throughout the school and pupils’ learning has picked up rapidly. Pupils now have a much better understanding of how to tackle mathematical problems and the range of strategies they can use to help them. For instance, when calculating the cost of different selections from an Indian Takeaway menu, some Year 5 pupils rounded the values to the nearest pound then estimated to get a rough idea of the size of the answers they expected, while others split the values and worked with the separate parts of each price to build up their answers. Pupils in Year 6 are being challenged very well to develop quick mental skills, for example calculating the percentage increase and decrease in market stall prices. Teachers know that the standards are not high enough and are constantly challenging and encouraging pupils to succeed. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, pupils recognised different two and three-dimensional shapes but had little idea about what made each shape different. The teacher used probing questions, such as “why isn’t my cassette tape a sphere?” and really made the pupils think. In this way, pupils broadened their knowledge and deepened their understanding well during this lesson.

88 Pupils enjoy working practically and have good attitudes to this aspect of mathematics. However, some older junior pupils are used to a diet of ‘drill and practice’ where they prefer to be given worksheets and pages of sums to complete. These pupils rely too much on being told what, and how, to do their work and therefore still find it hard to come to terms with being given a problem and

asked to solve it for themselves. This is why, despite the very good teaching in Year 6, standards are still suffering because pupils have not had sufficient experience of applying their basic mathematical skills. Infant pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn but some boys in Year 2 spend too much time shouting out and too little time concentrating on their work. The teacher handles this well but the immature attitudes of some of this class sometimes get in the way of their work.

89 Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in mathematics lessons. Teachers and classroom assistants modify activities and use practical equipment to help these pupils learn effectively. For instance, in a Year 3 lesson pupils used large plastic coins stuck to whiteboards to help them grasp the concept of how much money was being spent on grocery items. There are some pupils in the school who have an aptitude for mathematics and could do better. These pupils have been held back by the lack of rigour and consistency in previous teaching, but they are starting to be recognised now. However, their needs are not being fully catered for yet. For instance, in the same Year 3 lesson, because of the high number of pupils with special educational needs, there was still a tendency for the teacher to 'give' pupils the methods to use rather than asking what they thought. This meant that the small number of potentially 'more able' pupils were not challenged as well as they could have been. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. This indicates what pupils have done correctly but marking rarely provides helpful feedback on what they need to do to improve their work. This means that the 'more able' pupils do not have sufficient knowledge of their own learning, or of what they are ultimately trying to achieve.

90 Mathematics has a high profile in the school. The subject manager knows precisely why standards have dropped and what needs to be done to improve them. She supports and guides colleagues well and has monitored their work critically and effectively. The curriculum, and the way it is being taught, is now secure and this is starting to have a positive benefit on pupils' learning. At present, there is little use of ICT to support mathematics and this is an area that has already been highlighted for development within the school.

## **SCIENCE**

91 By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards in science are below the levels expected for seven and 11 year olds. Standards have dropped quite significantly since the last inspection but there has been an upturn in the past year due to the better quality of teaching now taking place. Consequently, although the school's test performance was well below average last year, the work in the current Year 6 is slightly better, although 'more able' pupils could still be pushed further to achieve at higher levels.

92 Pupils in the infant classes are now getting a broad range of practical scientific experiences. For example, Year 1 pupils investigate 'sound' by considering the different ways it can be produced by various musical instruments, while Year 2 pupils explore simple electrical circuits to make a bulb light up. Pupils write up their experiments and use simple drawings to record their results, such as how much their plants have grown, but much of their work is hindered by their limited writing skills. Some pupils have had little experience of exploring and investigating for themselves, and have relied too much on teacher-prepared worksheets to record their observations in the past. This is now starting to change, with a much greater emphasis on practical work and scientific enquiry. However, this legacy has carried through into the junior classes. Here, many pupils do not have sufficient skills to increase their knowledge and understanding of science through practical investigation. However, they are beginning to acquire these necessary skills and, although a lot of work is still currently very much guided by the teacher, the school has placed a priority on this aspect of science in order to raise attainment. For instance, Year 6 pupils are starting to understand that they can solve problems by

collecting evidence through appropriate experiment and research, such as investigating whether a substance is 'salt' or 'sugar' by looking at the patterns of evaporation and condensation.

93 Teaching in science is good. Teachers prompt and question pupils very well and pupils respond enthusiastically. For example, in the Year 1 lesson on 'sound', pupils thoroughly enjoyed investigating the noises made by different musical instruments and were interested and eager to put forward their own suggestions. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and take great care to make sure that practical equipment is used correctly. There are, however, small groups of boys in a number of classes who show challenging behaviour, which inevitably affects their progress. For instance, in the Year 2 lesson on electrical circuits, some boys were particularly boisterous and disruptive at the start of the lesson and took too long to settle to their practical work. Despite this, other pupils in the class continued with their own work and were delighted when some of them not only managed to light a bulb but managed to work out how to make a buzzer sound too. For older pupils, there is a very good link with the local comprehensive school, which involves a subject specialist teacher working with Years 5 and 6 on specific projects. This makes an effective contribution to the science curriculum and is having a beneficial effect in helping to improve standards.

94 The support which teachers and classroom assistants give to pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers work hard to provide an appropriate level of work for these pupils and planning challenging targets. Both teachers and assistants work alongside these pupils to ensure that they have the same opportunities as everyone else to experiment and investigate. However, the tasks which 'more able' pupils do are not always sufficiently challenging and do not give them the scope to work more independently. This is one of the reasons why standards are still too low at the end of Year 6.

95 Teachers do not mark pupils' written work consistently enough in science. Much work is merely ticked and some left unmarked. In some cases, marking is inaccurate, for example when pulling a cord is described as a "push" force, which is marked correct. Although the quality of marking has improved recently, it still does not tell pupils enough about how to improve or what to do next. Teachers do not currently give pupils sufficient opportunities to use their ICT skills to enhance their learning in science, for example by using databases, CDs or the Internet to do independent research or by using sensors to monitor and record changes in the physical environment.

96 Science has taken a low priority behind English, mathematics and ICT for the past few years and, consequently, there has been little influential monitoring, such as observing lessons, monitoring planning and marking, and developing assessment procedures. Because of recent changes in staffing, the subject manager has only been recently appointed. However, together with the head teacher, she has already recognised the need to raise the profile of science by giving pupils more opportunities for independent scientific enquiry, by making greater use of ICT and by raising the attainment of 'more able' pupils.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

97 By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards in art and design match what is expected for seven and 11 year olds. The school offers a broad range of creative experiences for pupils and encourages them to take pride in their achievements. Pupils' work is displayed well throughout the school, giving them the opportunity to see the contributions they have made to a common theme or as part of the study of an artist.

98 Few lessons were seen but pupils' work shows that teaching is satisfactory and that pupils develop sound knowledge and skills. For example, pupils in Year 2 have used a variety of materials to make a collage portrait, combining facial features cut from magazines with fabrics and card. They explored other ways of doing portraits, and some pupils showed an understanding of shading and how it may be used to show the depth of features. Pupils in year 3 use their sketchbooks well to record their observations and notes. They study the work of Van Gogh, and have produced plant drawings and experimented with shape and colour in his style. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils have developed a sound knowledge of painting and printing techniques, which they use to good effect when studying the works of Paul Klee. 'More able' pupils interpret the work of Henri Matisse in both two and three dimensions, using materials skilfully. However, these pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their ideas further, for example on a larger scale or in a media of their choice. There are limitations on time and teachers direct much of the work so that all pupils will produce something.

99 The policy and schemes which teachers use are based on national guidelines and provide a good basis for developing pupils' skills and knowledge. There is a reasonable amount of time available for art and design, but while the school's priorities have been focused elsewhere, namely English, mathematics and ICT, there have limited opportunities for the subject manager to develop this subject further. Despite this, the school has maintained satisfactory standards since the last inspection.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

100 By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards in design and technology match what is expected for seven and 11 year olds.

101 Infant pupils enjoy thinking about the models they are going to make and carry out the actual construction process enthusiastically. For example, pupils in Year 2 have made a small version of 'Joseph's coat of many colours'. They used pieces of coloured felt to design and make their coat and related this to the design that they have done previously on a computer art program. Junior pupils develop their making skills well and take great pride in their finished work. For instance, Year 6 pupils made good quality constructions of a model fairground ride using straws. They described how they adapted their construction to provide greater strength, as their models developed. However, despite the quality of their actual products, older pupils have limited design skills. Many of their initial designs are simply basic drawings that are unlabelled and give little indication of how the model will be constructed. Similarly, pupils talk about their work and adapt their ideas as they go along, but they rarely formally evaluate their finished products against the original design.

102 Only one lesson was seen but displays and pupils' work show that teaching in design and technology is satisfactory. The school's policy and schemes give teachers good guidance and provide a good basis for developing pupils' skills and knowledge. These are now being used consistently throughout the school, with the result that a greater emphasis on 'design' and 'evaluation' is starting to filtrate into all classes. Little time or attention has been given to this subject while the school's priorities have been focused elsewhere. The subject manager has therefore had little opportunity to develop areas such as assessment and reporting procedures, monitoring of teaching and teachers' professional development. Nevertheless, the subject is soundly managed and standards have been maintained at a satisfactory level since the last inspection.

## **GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY**

103 By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards in geography and history match what is expected for seven and 11 year olds. Standards in geography and history are not the strengths that were identified in the last inspection. However, the curriculum has been refined since then and, with the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, less time has been available for history and geography. Consequently, the school has done well to maintain satisfactory standards in both these subjects.

104 The quality of teaching has improved since the time of the last inspection. Teaching is now good in both subjects with some very good teaching in history in the junior classes. Teachers have good and often very good subject knowledge. They know their pupils well and think carefully how to teach interesting lessons that motivate all pupils. They use effective methods to encourage pupils to find information for themselves and to extend their knowledge. For example, a miniature papyrus, sarcophagus, amulet and Egyptian necklace stimulated discussion effectively and prompted junior pupils to look in books to find out more details about the significance of these artefacts to the Ancient Egyptians. Similarly, 'Barnaby Bear' captured younger pupils' interest of distant places as he travels around the world and shares his holiday diary with them. Teachers use resources very well to capture pupils' interest and to make them keen to learn more. For instance, Year 1 pupils closely observed a good range of toys from the past and compared them with their own toys. This was an appealing way for young pupils to understand the changes that have taken place over time.

105 Lessons are delivered in a lively way, and good support from well briefed classroom assistants and parents help pupils with special educational needs to be as successful as the others. Teachers

bring history to life by introducing drama to help pupils to understand what it was like to experience an air raid during the Second World War, or to take part in imaginary mummifying procedures associated with the Ancient Egyptians. Teachers also make very good use of educational visits and visitors to the school to provide pupils with first hand experiences in geography and history. This makes learning meaningful and fun. For example, the recent visit of a Viking storyteller brought history alive for Year 3 pupils, just as a visit to the Hancock Museum enriched learning for Year 6 pupils. The local area, rich in a variety of geographical features, is well used to promote geographical enquiry throughout the school. For instance, infant pupils gain knowledge and understanding of their own locality when they find out how people in the local area help them. By the time they are in Year 5, pupils' studies are effectively broadened to find out how the River Tyne influences the social and economic life of the region.

106 Teachers realise that English and mathematics are key priorities for the school and are good at planning opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in geography and history. Pupils in Year 1 have made simple graphs to record their investigations on holiday transport and, by the time they reach Year 6, pupils are challenged to investigate world time zones. Pupils use their research skills well to access information from books and pamphlets, and to record their findings in a number of ways, including notes, illustrations and more detailed writing.

107 Pupils thoroughly enjoy their work in both these subjects and are keen to learn. They join in discussions enthusiastically and take pride in what they know. For instance, 'The Great Fire of London' made a particular impression with Year 2 pupils who discussed the event with a great deal of detail and understanding. Pupils do make some use of ICT to support their work. For example, Year 5 pupils have created the commentary for a video to trace the journey of the River Tyne from the source to the sea using correct geographical terminology such as 'tributary', 'source', 'meanders' and 'mouth'. However, there are many missed opportunities where ICT could enhance and develop pupils' learning in both geography and history.

108 Both subjects are well co-ordinated by managers who have a clear understanding of their role. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. As a result, managers monitor teachers' planning and pupils' books to check on curriculum coverage and pupils' standards. In this way they are well placed to identify where future improvements need to take place, and have already identified ICT as a priority for development in both subjects.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

109 By the end of Year 2, standards in ICT match what is expected for seven year olds. By the end of Year 6, standards are below where they should be for 11 year olds. This is because the school has suffered repeated technical setbacks in setting up the computer suite. Consequently, junior pupils have not had sufficient experiences for a couple of years and therefore have gaps in their knowledge.

110 Infant pupils are confident and thoroughly enjoy using computers. For instance, when Year 1 pupils started to use a simple sorting program to classify mathematical shapes, they were amazed at how easily they could move objects around by 'clicking' and 'dragging' with the mouse. Pupils know how to log themselves onto the school's network and how to save and print their own work. Junior pupils are developing their basic skills rapidly, now that they have regular access to the computer suite. For instance, when pupils in Year 3 had their first experience of electronic mail, they quickly grasped the idea that they could read a message and reply to it. Older pupils are starting to plug the gaps in their knowledge and use a much wider range of software and equipment. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 are getting to grips with databases and spreadsheets, while Year 6 pupils have worked

hard to put together a multimedia slide show (incorporating sound, graphics and animation) linked to their history topic of Ancient Egypt.

111 Teaching is good. Some teachers are still a little hesitant and unsure themselves, but they readily accept the challenge and learn alongside the pupils in their class. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and put in a lot of preparation to make sure that they maximise the time they have available in the suite. Teachers demonstrate skills well, using a projector and whiteboard, and this helps them to take pupils step-by-step through new pieces of software and activities. Pupils generally pay good attention although their enthusiasm sometimes gets the better of them, before they start working practically on the computers. In a couple of classes, the short attention spans and immature behaviour of some boys can interrupt the flow of the lesson and cause the pace of their learning to slow, although teachers manage this situation well. Classroom assistants make a very good contribution to pupils' learning in ICT. They have good knowledge and help to reduce the incidence of misbehaviour.

112 The school has a well-planned curriculum for ICT but it still has some gaps in the resources needed to deliver this completely. For instance, pupils have not been given opportunities to use sensors linked to computers to monitor and control the physical environment. Similarly, their use of electronic mail and the Internet is still in its infancy. The subject manager has a good grasp of what needs to be done to improve standards and is tackling this systematically. However, the recent focus on making sure that pupils are taught the basic ICT skills they need has meant that there is little use of ICT elsewhere in the curriculum. This ultimately affects pupils' standards in ICT as well as limiting its contribution to other subjects.

113 The school has clearly made a large investment and good improvements in ICT in recent years. Despite this, standards are lower than they were in the last inspection, but are now starting to recover.

## **MUSIC**

114 By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards in music match what is expected for seven and 11 year olds. Infant pupils perform together frequently, for example in assemblies and school productions. They develop a sense of the shape of a melody and keep to a steady pulse. They use a variety of simple instruments to explore sound and rhythm, whilst making a short performance with a beginning, a middle and an end. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning, as they move through the school, both in music lessons and through a wealth of other opportunities. In hymn practices, for instance, junior pupils sing together in tune and with expression and enthusiasm. They combine different parts of a song to produce harmonies and are aware of the combined effect. They sing with clear enjoyment in their performance. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils discuss the ways in which they have composed tunes by writing down their own musical notation to perform. They then perform in pairs and groups on a variety of instruments to explore rhythm and volume. A significant number of pupils in Year 6 have acquired musical skills on instruments such as the violin, cornet, flute and piano through individual tuition in school. They also have many opportunities to develop their musical skills and enjoyment by performing together, such as school productions, singing in church and appearing at the Fish Quay Festival. However, older pupils have a limited knowledge and understanding of the works of classical and popular composers.

115 Insufficient direct teaching of music was seen to judge the quality of teaching. However, teachers clearly have good relationships with pupils, who respond enthusiastically in their singing. Teachers' individual plans for lessons fit into an overall commercial scheme, based upon an appropriate music policy. This helps to ensure that there is some continuity to pupils' work as they move through the school.

116 Because of recent changes in staffing, the subject manager has only been very recently appointed to the post and has had little opportunity to make an impact. However, there are currently few opportunities in the role to develop the subject in areas such as assessment and reporting pupils' progress, or monitoring of teaching and planning. These are issues that were raised in the previous inspection and have yet to be resolved. Nevertheless, the school has maintained satisfactory standards in music since the last inspection.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

117 By the end of Year 2, standards in physical education match what is expected for seven year olds. By the end of Year 6, standards are higher than expected for 11 year olds. This is because the school puts a lot of effort and emphasis into giving pupils a wide range of sporting experiences and also because pupils start swimming lessons in Year 4. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils can swim well in excess of the required 25 metres, in a range of strokes, and many have developed life-saving skills.

118 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and give pupils a good balance of physical activity and skill development. The head teacher is a specialist in this subject and often works alongside other teachers to provide additional support during lessons. For instance, in an outdoor lesson for Year 5, the class benefited from high levels of adult input by the class teacher, head teacher and a visiting football coach. This meant that pupils got focused attention, and the effective intervention by the adults helped pupils to develop and improve their ball skills and techniques in football and rounders. Swimming is taught well. Again, the head teacher makes a strong contribution working alongside a specialist instructor. Pupils are given clear instructions and correct strokes and techniques are demonstrated well. As a result, many pupils quickly become comfortable and confident in the water, and progress rapidly onto swimming lengths in various strokes.

119 Pupils thoroughly enjoy their physical activities. They usually behave well but, if an opportunity occurs, some boys will take advantage of the situation and act immaturely. For instance, during an outdoor circuit training session with a volunteer parent, a couple of infant boys deliberately waited until he had his back to them then behaved in a silly and unacceptable way. This was quickly checked but it spoiled the flow of the lesson and reduced the enjoyment for other pupils. Similarly, although junior pupils behaved impeccably during the taught part of their swimming lesson, some boys again took advantage of the brief 'free time' at the end to play around and misbehave.

120 Physical education is seen as an important part of the school's curriculum, to balance the academic drive to raise standards in English and mathematics. The head teacher is the subject manager and she shares her passion for sport with the staff and pupils alike. Consequently, the school does well and is successful in local competitive leagues such as football and netball. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs, which are designed to appeal to all ages and interests, including an 'early years' football club for nursery and reception children and Irish dancing. These all make a positive contribution to pupils' social development and to the high standards in physical education. There have been good improvements in this subject, and in the range of equipment in particular, since the last inspection.