

INSPECTION REPORT

ALDERMAN LEACH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Darlington

LEA area: Darlington

Unique reference number: 132204

Headteacher: Mrs C Thompson

Reporting inspector: Mrs L Murphy
16173

Dates of inspection: 15 – 18 April 2002

Inspection number: 244718

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

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Leach Grove
Darlington
County Durham

Postcode: DL3 0TW

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Cllr B Thistlethwaite

Date of previous inspection: N/A

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16173	Mrs L Murphy Registered inspector	Provision for children in the foundation stage.	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are the pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
9327	Mr S Vincent Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
16408	Mr C Rhodes Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology Religious education Equal opportunities	How well is the school led and managed?
18344	Mr D Earley Team inspector	English Art English as an additional language	
14851	Mr G Laws Team inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education Special educational needs	
21045	Mrs S Walker Team inspector	Science Geography History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Alderman Leach Primary School was formed in 2000 through the amalgamation of Alderman Leach Infant School and Alderman Leach Junior School. The new primary school is larger than average having 224 boys and 163 girls on roll. Some year groups have a marked gender imbalance. The school serves an established area of council-built and private housing to the west of Darlington. When pupils enter the school their attainment is below that typically expected. The majority of pupils are of white UK heritage. A very small proportion is from Chinese, African and Caribbean heritage. A small percentage of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is average nationally. The school has identified 79 pupils as having special educational needs ranging from learning to behavioural and emotional needs. This proportion is about average nationally. Very few pupils have statements of special educational needs. About one third of the staff have changed since the amalgamation and there have been three long-term absences. During the week of inspection a leading literacy teacher was employed temporarily to take responsibility for a class. The school has recently gained an award for achievement from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. The leadership of the school is effective in setting a clear educational direction. Standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology overall are above average by the time pupils leave the school because the quality of teaching of these subjects is good. Standards are satisfactory in the other subjects. The school is soundly managed and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology by the time pupils are 11.
- The quality of teaching is good for pupils aged 9 to 11, especially in literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils, including those who need extra help and those learning English as an additional language, make good progress during their time in this school.
- The headteacher and effective governing body set a clear educational direction for the school.
- A strong moral framework is provided in which the pupils work and play well together.
- The school takes very good care of its pupils.

What could be improved

- The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Standards in the reception classes and in design and technology for pupils in Year 1 – Year 2 and in geography across the school.
- The match of work to pupils' level of attainment in all subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The newly formed school has not previously been inspected. The school is consolidating its work since amalgamation. It has received an achievement award from the DfES in April 2002, which acknowledges the rise in standards over a number of years.

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			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	N/A	N/A	C	C
mathematics	N/A	N/A	A	A
science	N/A	N/A	A	A

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

Since the results of the national tests in 2001, as described in the table above, the school has concentrated on improving standards in English. This it has done successfully. Standards in Year 6 are now above average in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. They are below average in geography but average in all other subjects. In 2001 the school's targets were not met in English but were exceeded in mathematics. This year the school has set more challenging targets and is on course to meet them.

Standards at the end of Year 2 are above average in English, and average in mathematics and science. Standards are below average in geography and design and technology because there are long gaps in the teaching of these subjects. They are also below average in history.

From a below average starting point pupils make sound progress in the reception classes, though they are unlikely to attain the early learning goals for children of their age other than in personal and social development, in which they make good progress. In mathematical development children enter school at an average level, make sound gains and are on course to attain standards expected for their age.

Overall pupils' achievement is good. Pupils who need extra help and those who are learning English as an additional language also achieve well because of the effective provision.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; in many lessons the pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; pupils behave well in class and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good; relationships are very positive. Pupils respect adults and get on well together helping to make the school a pleasant and friendly place in which to work and play.
Attendance	Good; children enjoy school and this is reflected in the above average figures for attendance. There have been no recent exclusions of any kind.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	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.

Strengths in the teaching and learning of pupils in the reception year are in:

- personal and social development.

Strengths in the teaching and learning of pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are in:

- English, in particular in literacy and in science.

Strengths in the teaching and learning of pupils in Year 3 to Year 6 are in:

- English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology.

Weaknesses in the teaching and learning are in:

- Year 3, in which they are unsatisfactory in one class;
- in information and communication technology across other subjects;
- in the organisation of a minority of lessons in the reception classes; and
- in the precise match of work to pupils' levels of attainment across the school.

Pupils learn at a good rate overall because of the groupings in which they are placed, the good teaching of basic skills and teachers' knowledge and high expectations. The management of pupils is particularly effective and conducive to pupils' making good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of the majority of subjects they study.

Literacy is taught well across the school and as a result pupils make good progress in the basic skills of reading and writing. The teaching of numeracy is sound for the Year 1 to Year 2 pupils and good for the Year 3 to Year 6 pupils.

Those pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language receive teaching of good quality and learn at a good rate. The school meets the needs of the majority of pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory; it meets statutory requirements and is relevant to the needs of the pupils. There is some imbalance as it is weighted towards English and mathematics as the school has rightly concentrated on raising standards in these subjects. The curriculum has yet to be refined to ensure that all elements of the National Curriculum are taught regularly.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good; extra help is promptly provided for those who need it. The support is effective in enabling pupils to make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good; the school and support service work well together and with children and parents to ensure that they make overall good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good; the school makes sound provision for pupils' spiritual development. Social and cultural development are fostered well. There are very good opportunities for pupils to confront moral dilemmas and to consider the differences between right and wrong.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well; teachers know the children very well and this helps the school to provide support and help wherever it is needed. Teachers have a clear understanding of how well pupils are learning and this helps them to make lessons interesting as well as helping pupils to achieve the best they can. Although teachers assess how well pupils

	do in individual lessons, the information is not used enough within groups to provide challenging work for all pupils.
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How well the school works in partnership with parents	To a good standard; parents approve of the work done by the school and the education provided for their children. Parents receive a good range of information about what is going on in the school and this encourages them to play their part.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory; the headteacher provides good direction to the school with a clear focus on raising standards. The subject leadership of a proportion of the staff significantly strengthens the management. The roles of the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher are under-developed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Effectively; the governing body has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development. Statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good; the school carries out detailed analysis of its results in national tests and has a considered approach to applying the outcomes to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Good; the school consults staff, governors and parents about particular matters and obtains resources at a competitive price. It uses them effectively to meet its aims. It compares its performance with that of other schools locally and nationally. Staffing and accommodation are good. The resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy school. • The good progress made by the children. • Children's behaviour, which is good. • The effective teaching and expectations that pupils work hard. • The encouragement to be mature and take responsibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework that is set. • The leadership and management of the school. • The range of activities outside lessons.

The inspection judgement confirms and agrees with all of the positive views of parents. The amount and use of homework are satisfactory and broadly as would be found in most other schools.

Following the amalgamation, the headteacher and the chair of the governing body have provided a clear vision of how the school should move forward and have provided effective leadership. Some refinement of the management structure is still necessary to ensure that overall management is improved. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. These are a mixture of sporting and cultural activities which are well attended and much enjoyed by the pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. *Strengths:*

- *children's good achievement in personal and social development by the end of the reception year;*
- *standards and achievement in English by the ages of seven and 11;*
- *standards and achievement in mathematics, science and information and communication technology by the age of 11; and*
- *the progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language.*

Weaknesses:

- *standards and achievement in geography by the ages of seven and 11;*
- *standards in design and technology and history by the age of seven; and*
- *inconsistent progress among children in the reception classes.*

2 In the national tests in 2001 pupils' performance in English at the age of seven indicated strengths in reading and average standards in writing and mathematics. In reading the school's performance compared very favourably with that of schools with similar intakes though it was below average in writing. Performance in mathematics was below that of similar schools. In the national tests for 11 year olds in the same year the standards attained in English, while being sound overall, were not as high as those reached in mathematics or science either nationally or in comparison with standards in similar schools.

3 The school had already diagnosed its strengths and weaknesses and as a result it chose to concentrate on raising standards in English. This it has done successfully so that standards are now above average for seven and 11 year olds. In English the majority of pupils attain at least the expected standards for their age and a significant proportion of pupils exceed them. Standards in speaking and listening are also above average reflecting the priority given to language. This impacts well on the standards attained in literacy. By Year 6 pupils are capable of reading accurately and fluently with good levels of understanding. Pupils produce writing of good quality and apply the conventions of punctuation appropriately though spelling is not as well developed.

4 The levels of attainment of pupils in Year 2 have been maintained in mathematics and standards in both mathematics and science are at levels expected for their age. Standards in mathematics and science have fallen slightly by the end of Year 6 because of the thrust in English but nonetheless are above average. Pupils' mental arithmetic is developed well through the school and they apply their numeracy skills well in problem solving.

5 The attainment of children entering the school is below that typically expected of children of their age other than in mathematical development, in which it is broadly average. Overall, on entry children have limited skills in speaking and listening and in their general knowledge which means they have much ground to make up. Good teaching in personal and social development means that pupils make good gains and are on course to attain the early learning goal in this aspect by the time they leave the reception classes. In all other areas of learning children achieve soundly but are unlikely to attain typical standards by the time they transfer to Year 1. Their development is directly linked to the quality of the teaching and the nature of the curriculum, both of which are inconsistent at times.

6 Good teaching in science by the end of Year 2 ensures that pupils come to an increased understanding of scientific knowledge. Their skills in observation develop well and they get better at investigating problems reaching average standards. Year 2 pupils make sound progress in

mathematics and the majority of other subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, and reach standards typical for their age. The Year 2 teacher is new to the age group and still coming to grips with teaching an unfamiliar curriculum. In design and technology, geography and history standards are below expectation because these subjects are not taught regularly enough.

7 Good teaching in Year 4 to Year 6 means that standards are pulled up in mathematics, science, and information and communication technology and are above average. In most other subjects by the age of 11 pupils' average attainment reflects the focus and extra curricular time devoted to English, mathematics and science, leaving religious education, art, design and technology, history and music with at times a limited curriculum. In geography standards are below those typically expected because, as is the case for the seven year olds, the subject is taught irregularly. The quality of teaching in Year 3 is unsatisfactory in one class and this means that pupils' learn faster in one class than in the other. No judgement was made on standards in physical education by the age of 11.

8 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because the provision works well for them throughout the school. Their achievement in English, mathematic and science means that almost all will reach national standards. Precise targets are devised for them to show them what they need to do to improve and as a result reading levels improve significantly. Some pupils still make spelling errors, but work hard to eradicate them. Handwriting is of variable quality. All cope well with the four rules of number and skills in mental arithmetic are appropriate. In 2001, every pupil on the register attained the national standard in science – a very significant achievement.

9 Those learning English as an additional language also make good progress because the provision is well coordinated and goes across the subject barriers. Pupils make good progress overall and are very well integrated into the life and work of the school because teachers ensure that they have equal opportunities to succeed. The school has identified a group of gifted and talented pupils but identification and support are at a very early stage and have yet to have significant impact.

10 Across the school the good systems for tracking pupils' progress and charting their attainment help to improve the rate of progress and raise standards. The grouping of pupils by their levels of attainment into classes for English and mathematics gets pupils off to a good start in Years 4 to Year 6. The school has yet to take the next step to match work more precisely within the groups so that in particular the higher attainers are really well challenged. The systems used to establish a curriculum in the new school and to ensure parity between parallel year groups has served its purpose well and subject leaders have on the whole done a good job in providing lesson planning for their subjects. The school has moved on, standards are rising and the staff are ready to take on more responsibility for the planning and matching of work to the pupils in their own class.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

11 *Strengths:*

- *pupils enjoy coming to school and are positive about their work;*
- *behaviour in lessons and at playtimes is good;*
- *pupils are increasingly mature and relationships are very good; and*
- *attendance is above the national average.*

12 Pupils' have positive attitudes to their work and enjoy learning. Most parents confirm that their children enjoy school. In the majority of lessons pupils' attitudes are good and often very good. They are keen to please their teachers, they work hard and are enthusiastic. Most settle down to work quickly and sustain this effort consistently. They like to talk about the lessons they enjoy and most are involved in one or more of the extra-curricular clubs offered.

13 Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good and often very good. There are just a few pupils who

do not always listen to the teachers as well as they should and a few fidget and become restless, but this is not a serious problem and does not inhibit learning as teachers manage behaviour well. In the playground pupils are equally well behaved and make good use of the play equipment available. Boys and girls play well together and there are very few instances of unacceptable behaviour. There have been no exclusions of any kind. Relationships at all levels are very good and the atmosphere in the school is friendly. Pupils of all heritages and backgrounds are fully integrated into the school community. The pupils themselves say that it is a friendly place to be. The pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and how they should behave, consequently the school functions well as a community. Parents express their approval of the standards of behaviour achieved.

14 Children in the reception class are generally well behaved and enjoy their work and play. They enjoy the challenge of new activities and work well together, sharing toys and equipment well. On occasion when the teaching is less than satisfactory children often forget to work quietly and become unsettled, flitting from one task to another or wasting time. When this happens the rate of their learning slows down.

15 Pupils' personal development is good. They speak increasingly well in class, grow in confidence and speak respectfully to adults. They share resources, help to organise their classrooms, take their turn and work co-operatively in pairs and groups. They are keen to raise funds for charities. They particularly enjoy taking responsibility around the school and talk proudly about their roles as prefects, monitors and the various awards they can all win. Their understanding of their own learning targets and the standards they are achieving also develops well so that by the end of Year 6 they are confident and articulate young people, well prepared to move on to secondary education.

16 Pupils with special educational needs have a keen desire to improve. Some attend after school homework clubs. They respect others and take good care of their environment. Other pupils are particularly appreciative of the gains made by pupils who find learning difficult. Almost all of these pupils attend regularly, and undertake their full share of classroom responsibilities. Pupils with identified behavioural problems almost always behave responsibly in the classroom.

17 Pupils come willingly to school and attendance is slightly above the national average. Unauthorised absence is well below the national average. The majority of pupils consistently arrive at school on time and the school day starts promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18 *Strengths:*

- *the management of pupils in Year 3 to Year 6;*
- *the teaching of literacy in Year 4 to Year 6;*
- *the teaching of basic skills; and*
- *the expectations teachers have of pupils in Year 4 to Year 6.*

Weaknesses:

- *inconsistent organisation of pupils in the reception classes; and*
- *inconsistent teaching in Year 3 ranging from good to poor.*

19 Parents view teaching and learning as good and the inspection judgement bears this out. Time has been spent in this new school developing the quality of teaching, though it still has some way to go to bring about a consistent level of strong teaching.

20 Teaching is at its strongest in English and this reflects the focus the school has placed to the subject. Teachers are skilled at developing pupils' speaking and listening skills and in creating opportunities for them to be used across a range of subjects. Good teaching also takes place in

science where an interesting range of activities engages pupils' curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Strengths in the teaching of Year 3 to Year 6 pupils also lie in mathematics, which provides opportunities for solving problems, and in information and communication technology where the teaching challenges pupils intellectually.

21 The teaching in the reception classes has strengths in the teaching of personal and social development. Relationships with the pupils are strong and as a result the children are happy and increasingly confident in their work and play. Independence is encouraged through classrooms which are conducive to the children's self-sufficiency. Day-to-day assessment is satisfactory and records are increasingly helpful in enabling staff to plan appropriate work. At best the teaching assistants are deployed well and provide the much-needed extra opportunities for pupils to develop their language. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is variable but sound overall and prepares the children appropriately for their work in Year 1. The thoroughness that is often evident in literacy and numeracy lessons is not as evident where children are expected to make individual choices. Shortcomings are in the way in which the children are organised, which is inconsistent between classes and between lessons and on occasion unsatisfactory. This is particularly so in areas of learning such as knowledge and understanding of the world. At these times, although small groups of pupils in turn receive direct teaching, the majority of the class is on occasion insufficiently well organised to make the most of the learning opportunities provided. This is because not all staff in the reception classes have sufficient experience with the age group. As a result children do not make the best use of the range of important activities from which to choose and as a result can mark time. This was also the case in one daily lesson in mathematics.

22 Teachers have good subject knowledge in the majority of subjects of the curriculum, and are particularly proficient at challenging pupils to do their best because of the high expectations they have of the pupils. Teachers manage the pupils' behaviour well in Years 1 to 3 and very well in Years 4 to 6. As a result pupils in these year groups work at a good pace and sustain concentration.

23 Across the school a range of methods is used to motivate and develop pupils' understanding. Pupils understand what they are doing, how well they have done and how they can improve. Teachers make effective use of support staff during group work to help pupils who learn at different rates. Pupils respond well to the extra adult help. Teaching assistants are underused at times when the class teacher is working directly with the whole class; for example, at story time when they listen to the teacher reading or at the beginning and end of literacy and numeracy lessons when their groups join the rest of the class.

24 Relationships between teachers and pupils are natural and purposeful and this means that pupils are willing to share their thoughts and have a go at challenging work, being unafraid to fail. This is so in the teaching of information and communication technology, in which pupils make good progress.

25 The daily lessons in mathematics work well because they are soundly planned, and staff teach the basic skills effectively. Teachers pose challenging questions, to which pupils respond wholeheartedly, aiming high. In a numeracy lesson in Year 6, for example, the pace of teaching was brisk because the teacher made clear references to the time the pupils had to complete component parts of the task. Effective use was made of games to engage pupils' attention and to make learning fun. At the same time pupils knew they had to apply their mental arithmetic skills quickly to be able to keep pace with the lesson. Clarity of discussion enabled good gains to be made in pupils' understanding of division. The pupils wanted to learn and behaved very well.

26 The teaching of literacy is good. Teachers have high expectations of what they want their pupils to achieve by the end of each lesson and they make sure that the transition from discussion to group work is seamless. Teachers' very good subject knowledge comes to the fore and gives them confidence in helping pupils with persuasive argument and writing. For example, in a debate for and against hunting pupils gained from the class discussion and then went away to write their individual arguments.

27 Pupils are grouped according to their different levels of attainment and work is set for each class group. This generally works well when the group is very small and the teacher sets clear expectations of individual achievement. For example, in a class to boost pupils' attainment very good revision of the previous lesson on the use of commas led pupils well into first reading and then writing sentences with the commas placed correctly. The teaching was gentle and focused, providing pupils with a certain assurance that helped them to settle quickly to their work and make very good progress at their own level.

28 Overall, however, the grouping is only a first step towards matching work to pupils' levels of attainment and the school has yet to further refine it so that across the school, work is well matched to individuals and small groups. As it stands, higher attainers often do the same work as others in the group and are only further challenged by completing more of the same. A mark of the excellent teaching is that tasks are very well planned to meet the differing needs of all the pupils in the class. The teaching excites and motivates the pupils and builds their confidence so that they attain more than they ever expected to do in a lesson. 'Watch out for my tricky sums' challenges one teacher in a lively manner that entices pupils to try their very best to succeed.

29 A small proportion of the very strongest teaching was by temporary staff, which meant that though in the week of inspection one class of pupils benefited enormously this was not the level of teaching which they usually receive. In the lessons in Year 3 where teaching was unsatisfactory, lessons were appropriately planned but the timing, pace and consequent challenge were unsatisfactory and occasionally poor. Insufficient focus on generating discussion and a lack of clarity in explanations means that pupils make slow progress in these lessons.

30 Sometimes the quality of teaching is reduced because of the teacher's inexperience with a particular year group. It is also rendered less effective than it might be when a subject is not taught regularly, as in the case of geography, or as a result of the school's concentration on improving standards in English and mathematics, as is the case of music and physical education.

31 Literacy is used well in other subjects and numeracy is used soundly. The use of information and communication technology across subjects is unsatisfactory, in the main because it is insufficiently well planned, because computers are not available in each classroom and because the computer suite remains mostly unused during the hours when literacy and numeracy are being taught.

32 Pupils with special educational needs are generally taught in the regular classes. They are occasionally withdrawn for extra support. In Year 5 and Year 6 a small class is created to give extra help in English and mathematics. This works successfully. Teaching assistants have a key role to play within classes. They know the children well and focus on their identified targets which are reviewed regularly. This helps pupils to make good progress, particularly when teaching assistants are involved in the early stages of lesson planning.

33 Close links are maintained between the class teachers and the support teacher for those pupils learning English as an additional language. This ensures that there is consistency of approach, which helps to enhance the overall good progress made by these children.

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

34 *Strengths:*

- *a priority to English and mathematics;*
- *provision for pupils' moral development is very good;*
- *provision for pupils' social and cultural development is good;*
- *good provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those learning English as an*

additional language;

- *provision for personal, social and health education is good; and*
- *provision for extra-curricular activities is good.*

Weaknesses:

- *some imbalance in the curriculum leading to sporadic teaching and lack of clarity about when skills are taught in design and technology, art and design and geography;*
- *the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum;*
- *the curriculum for the joint Year 1 and Year 2 class;*
- *match of work to pupils' needs is often imprecise;*
- *attention given to the use of the outside environment and children's physical development in the reception classes; and*
- *spirituality in lessons.*

35 The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory overall. Religious education is taught in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. Much time and effort have gone into building a curriculum to serve the needs of the newly amalgamated primary school. The medium-term curricular planning ensures that the National Curriculum is implemented in most subjects and provided continuity when the new school was at an early stage of development. The curriculum is broad and relevant to the needs of the pupils, meeting statutory requirements. Additional features such as educational visits and musical performances and sport enrich it.

36 The curriculum for the reception children is taking shape. Strengths are in the introduction of educational play and of literacy and numeracy in readiness for pupils' transfer to Year 1. Weaknesses are in the provision of outside play to develop children's physical and imaginative skills and their knowledge and understanding of the world.

37 A strong priority has rightly been given to the teaching of English, mathematics and science as the school works to raise standards. There is however, some imbalance in the curriculum because other subjects have not received the same attention. The development of some subjects, notably design and technology, art and design and geography, has been hindered because it is too sporadic. In some cases there are long gaps between the blocks of teaching time allocated to a particular subject. For example, in Year 5 in geography only two half-termly topics are planned for the whole academic year. Thus, several months elapse before pupils are able to resume their studies in the subject and this affects the continuity of learning. Similarly, pupils in Year 2 have not done any design and technology at all during the current year.

38 Currently, medium-term plans are used as lesson plans. This system represents an efficient use of teachers' time and brings about consistency but further refinement is needed to provide better support for teachers as they plan for the specific needs of their pupils. Long and medium-term curricular plans for subjects other than English, mathematics and science are written by subject co-ordinators for all classes and are based on national guidance. The guidance has not yet been fully customised to meet the needs of the school, however. Lesson objectives from the guidance form the main focus for plans. This provides sound support for less confident teachers in subjects in which their expertise is limited. However, in some subjects this does not always provide material of sufficient substance for teachers to devise a stimulating lesson. In some instances objectives provide too sketchy a basis for lessons and this can have an adverse impact on the quality of teaching. Furthermore the planning does not indicate when skills in subjects such as geography, art, design and technology are to be introduced nor how they are to build in the correct sequence to ensure that pupils' knowledge and understanding are enhanced as they get older. The current system does not lend itself to mixed year groups and as a result Year 1 pupils taught in the joint Year 1 and 2 class do not receive the same curriculum as other pupils of the same age.

39 Although the arrangement whereby lesson plans are written by co-ordinators has some particular advantages, for example in ensuring that pupils in parallel classes in the same year group receive a similar curriculum and in helping to strengthen the role of the co-ordinators within the

management structure, it also has distinct disadvantages, which are having an adverse impact on learning. For example, teachers are not involved in planning the curriculum they are expected to implement. The system does not develop the skills of all teachers in curricular planning nor does it allow for the dissemination and sharing of ideas or to capitalise on good practice. Moreover, it means that the match of work to pupils' levels of attainment is insufficiently precise.

40 The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented well and are helping to raise standards. Additional support for those pupils who need extra help is provided in specially designated classes to boost their attainment and these are working well in consolidating pupils' skills and improving their confidence. Teachers are good at weaving opportunities for literacy into most lessons, for example when pupils record their work in science, history and geography. Likewise, there are frequent opportunities for pupils to extend their numeracy skills to other subjects, such as recording data in science or sequencing events in history. The use of information technology to support other subjects of the curriculum has not yet been developed and this is a weakness in the provision.

41 Pupils with special educational need benefit from the insistence on equal opportunity that is evident throughout the school. All teachers contribute significantly to the individual plans devised for these pupils, who always know what they need to do to improve. The withdrawal of small groups in Year 5 and Year 6 helps pupils to do well in national tests. The generous specialist time allocated and its very efficient use ensure that the pupils learning English as an additional language receive well-organised individual support in English and other subjects.

42 Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is particularly strong. A notable development has been the introduction to all classes of a time set aside for pupils to discuss feelings, emotions and relationships. This is working well as it gives good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in speaking and listening and provides particularly effective links with their moral development. In Years 5 and 6, for instance, pupils gain good insight into human behaviour when they explore an interesting range of moral dilemmas. Similarly, Year 2 pupils began to understand family relationships and the needs of the elderly through a story depicting the life span of a great grandma. Sex education is taught through science and also through a talk about puberty to older pupils by the school nurse. The pupils also have talks to raise awareness of the dangers and consequences of drug abuse. The provision does not go beyond this however, to provide a structured programme of drug awareness or sex education for all pupils to fully meet their needs and prepare them for the outside world.

43 The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities to enhance the curriculum. These include a choir, football, a drama club and the popular homework club, where Year 6 pupils have opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills. A recent event was the contribution of a local artist who worked with groups of pupils to create an attractive mural for the school's entrance. The school makes satisfactory use of the local community to support the curriculum. Links with local businesses are few.

Spiritual development

44 Daily acts of worship are generally of sound quality, meet statutory requirements and provide a good opportunity to celebrate achievement. During these sessions, signified by a lit candle, pupils are encouraged to reflect on matters that are relevant in their lives such as a time they too forgot to say 'thank you' like the ten lepers in the Bible story. In a good assembly based on the Bible story of the talents, pupils in Years 3 to 6 were able to think about things they can do well and to celebrate the talents of accomplished singers in the school. In less effective assemblies however, spiritual elements are under-emphasised, focusing more on rewarding good behaviour for example. Although such assemblies do much to promote the positive ethos of the school and reinforce pupils' moral development they are less effective in promoting spirituality and reflection. A valuable opportunity for quiet reflection is lost at the start and end of assemblies when carefully selected music is played as pupils enter and leave the hall. The value of this as a vehicle for

reflection is lost because pupils chatter at this time instead of listening thoughtfully. There are insufficient times for the whole school to meet together in assembly, which means good opportunities are lost to further establish the one school.

45 In the wider curriculum spirituality is fostered through art, poetry and music, for example when pupils study the work of artists such as Mondrian and incorporate his ideas into their own work. Pupils come to appreciate the beauty of the natural world when they search for tiny creatures in the school grounds, expressing great excitement and wonderment when they discover a wood louse or a spider hidden among leaves. Such valuable moments tend to arise incidentally in lessons but are infrequent and are not planned within the curriculum and therefore there is no guarantee that they will occur.

Moral development

46 There is strength in the provision for moral development, which is very good. It is supported well by the consistent approach to behaviour management taken by staff, with an emphasis on reward rather than punishment. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to reflect on human behaviour and its effect on others. Class discussions effectively help pupils to confront moral dilemmas, to consider the differences between right and wrong and to think about the decisions to be taken in everyday life. For example, in thoughtful discussion pupils in Year 6 made comparisons between the contribution to the community made by different professions. School rules and the systems for rewards and sanctions are promoted strongly to encourage good behaviour and respect for others in a positive way.

Social development

47 The good provision for social development helps pupils to recognise the need to consider others and to be co-operative and considerate. The school works hard to encourage positive relationships and pupils respond maturely. The consistent and frequent celebration of success in every field, not just academic achievement, raises the self-esteem of pupils and reinforces the standards of behaviour expected in the school. There are very good opportunities for group activities, collaboration and co-operation in practical lessons in some classes, which are effective in promoting social skills, as are the standards of courtesy and respect demonstrated by the staff in the manner in which they address the pupils.

Cultural development

48 There are good opportunities for pupils to develop awareness of their own culture through the range of visitors who come to school to widen the experiences of the pupils. Theatre groups and visiting artists all make a valuable contribution to the provision. Visits are made to local places of educational interest, such as Bede's World and the Roman Wall to supplement lessons. Pupils develop their understanding of the diversity of other cultures when they study religions other than Christianity, such as Judaism and Buddhism, as part of the curriculum for religious education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

49 Strengths:

- *the monitoring and management of behaviour are done well;*
- *the monitoring and improvement of attendance are done very well;*
- *procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are effective and help teachers to support the children in their class; and*
- *systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good.*

Weaknesses:

- *not enough use is made of assessment information in the planning of later work.*

50 The school takes very good care of pupils. Arrangements for care and welfare are very effective and this reflects the very good relationships and the trust between adults and pupils. Teachers know the children very well as individuals and are able to respond quickly to their needs.

51 The procedures for child protection are very well organised. Awareness and vigilance are maintained through general staff meetings and by training. The health and safety policy is comprehensive. Procedures are carried out diligently and responsibilities are properly defined. Routines of classroom safety, fire drills, first aid, medicines and general welfare are dealt with consistently. The personal, social and health education curriculum also plays a part. It gives opportunities for pupils to express their feelings and understand their changing emotions as they grow older. It deals with many aspects of staying safe in the world outside of school.

52 The monitoring and management of behaviour are effective. Most parents are very happy with the standards achieved and the pupils themselves say they enjoy school. Pupils work and play happily together and they know what to do if they have any fears or concerns. The rules are straightforward and clearly understood by pupils and they respond well. Parents express confidence that any unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with promptly. Teachers manage their classes well and pupils enjoy the rewards that are given for good behaviour and effort. 'Golden time', each Friday afternoon, is valued greatly by the pupils. Where it is necessary for individual pupils to improve their behaviour, this is done with the full involvement of parents in agreeing how to proceed. Assemblies are used well to show that care and consideration for others are important.

53 The monitoring of attendance is very thorough and concerns about absence or lateness are followed up promptly, if necessary with the help of the education welfare officer. It is made very clear to parents that regular attendance is an important factor in achieving good standards and they respond accordingly.

54 The school caters well for the pupils with special educational needs. In their individual plans, targets are precise and achievable. This helps to promote success. These targets are regularly reviewed and revised. The accompanying information in pupils' files is very thorough, and analyses all the important aspects of development. This ensures that the most appropriate individual targets are set.

55 The specialist teaching for pupils who learn English as an additional language is very experienced and knowledgeable. This enables children's strengths and weaknesses to be quickly identified and good support to be provided in the development of their language and its use in other subjects of the curriculum. Assessment and record keeping are used well in order to set targets for improvement and to monitor progress.

56 The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science are good. They provide detailed and reliable information about pupils' attainment in national and other standardised tests, and are used effectively to judge how well pupils are achieving year on year and as the basis for setting individual and year group targets. The results of National Curriculum tests are analysed in detail, and senior staff use the outcomes to compare boys' and girls' results, to see how well the school is doing over time, and to measure how the value added by the school affects pupils' overall performance.

57 Teachers regularly make judgements about pupils' progress in lessons. There is a good 'notepad' system in which teachers record individual pupils' progress in each subject at the end of every half term. However, they are not making enough use of this information when planning later work to make sure that lessons take account of the aspects of learning which some pupils find easy and finish quickly or find difficult and need more time to complete. In consequence some of the work in English and mathematics groups does not challenge higher attaining pupils enough, and work in other subjects, religious education for example, is unrewarding for lower attaining pupils when they repeatedly find the written tasks difficult to complete. There is no analysis of the impact on standards or pupils' understanding of basic skills caused by the long gaps between blocks of

work in geography, art and design, or design and technology.

58 The procedures for recording and monitoring personal development are good. Teachers have a clear understanding of attendance, behaviour, special needs, the development of social skills and any related concerns, and these too are recorded in the 'notepad' system operated by each class teacher.

59 All these procedures ensure that pupils receive good academic and personal support for their learning. The information is used to help place pupils in work groups to suit their abilities, to ensure that teaching assistants are deployed to help them if they have particular difficulties, and so that they can be given extra classes to develop key skills. The school knows that pupils gain confidence and self-esteem from their successes and works hard to help all pupils to achieve their best.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

60 *Strengths:*

- *parents have positive views about most aspects of the school's work;*
- *the links between the school and parents are effective and ensure that parents play their part in school life well; and*
- *a good range of information is provided for parents.*

61 The questionnaires and the meeting with parents before the inspection show that most parents are positive about what the school does for their children and the quality of education provided. There are high levels of satisfaction with the standards achieved, children's behaviour, progress, and the teaching. Parents like the high expectations teachers have of their pupils and the values taught. Almost all say their children enjoy school. Just a small number of parents are less happy with the homework arrangements, information about progress, the way the school works with them, leadership and management and the provision of activities outside of lessons.

62 Parents are given a good range of information about the school as a community and their children's progress. Day-to-day matters are dealt with by individual letters, and newsletters deal with information about general news and social events. There are occasional seminars and workshops about how parents can help with writing, reading and other aspects of learning. Parents have opportunities to talk to staff informally at the start and end of the day. Homework and reading diaries provide daily links with home. At the beginning of each term there is information about forthcoming topics and each pupils' specific learning targets. However, the pupils' annual reports are imprecise about what pupils know and understand and, in particular, what they need to do next to improve and how their parents can help them. There are general consultation meetings with parents each term at which progress can be discussed in detail. Staff always offer other means of speaking to those parents who cannot attend meetings. Parents of children with special educational needs are kept fully informed about progress and are involved in discussing their targets at review meetings.

63 As their children join the school there are introductory meetings at which parents receive a pack of information about the school. Almost all parents sign and return this to the school. These initial links between the school and home ensure that parents thereafter make a good contribution to the life of the school and what it achieves. Parents give good support to class assemblies, concerts, sporting and other events. The 'Friends of School' organise social events and fund-raising throughout the school year which directly benefit the pupils. A few parents provide valued help in class and with outside visits. A number of initiatives have been successful in working with parents. There have been 'family literacy' courses to help parents work with their children and there are currently courses to help parents understand the National Curriculum. The recent creation of the computer suite and the presence of the local education authority's computer centre on the school premises are also creating opportunities for parents to come into school and see it at work.

At the beginning of each year the school sends out its own questionnaire to seek the views of parents about a whole range of matters affecting themselves and their children. The school tries hard to involve parents and values their contributions greatly.

64 Parents are making a satisfactory contribution to their children's successes at school. Almost all parents are keen to attend and discuss progress at consultation evenings, particularly where their children have special needs. Most parents generally support homework and unauthorised absence is below the national average.

65 The parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in decisions about their children. There are meetings every term to decide new targets. The key link with parents is often the classroom assistant who provides a valuable extra point of contact. These members of staff usually maintain the home-school reading records. The school also has productive links with outside agencies such as the educational psychologist and the behaviour support service of the local education authority.

66 The school maintains close links with parents whose children are learning English as an additional language and makes very good use of the wide range of resources available from the school and support service.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67 *Leadership strengths:*

- *the headteacher and chair of governors have a clear vision for the future development of the school;*
- *the co-ordinators of English, science, information and communication technology, assessment and special educational needs provide particularly strong leadership;*
- *the governing body does its job effectively.*

Management strengths

- *the two former school buildings have been amalgamated successfully;*
- *a good start has been made in evaluating the school's strengths and weaknesses. The 'way forward' is set out clearly in the school improvement plan; and the budget is well managed; and*
- *the school has a good number of suitably qualified staff.*

Weaknesses:

- *the current deployment of the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher is severely limiting the effectiveness of their management functions.*

68 The headteacher and the chair of the governing body have a clear vision for the future development of the school. Their effective leadership has provided a clear direction to the school's work since its amalgamation. They are imparting their clear understanding of the school's strengths, as well as where action must be taken to improve. There has been steady progress in raising standards and the school has recently received an award for achievement from the DfES. The school's aims are promoted at all times and the school is achieving them well through the work it does every day. Standards are good; the school takes very good care of its pupils and is successfully promoting their moral and social skills.

69 The headteacher has developed rigorous and effective systems to manage the school and its large site, and to focus teachers' and pupils' attention on raising standards. The headteacher and senior staff are continuing to work through the difficult process of amalgamating the systems, philosophies and practices of the former junior and infant schools. One bold experiment has been to place the deputy headteacher, who formally worked in the infant school, with older pupils and to move the assistant headteacher from Year 5 to a class of much younger pupils. This has given the two staff concerned a valuable insight into different parts of the school but has taken up so much of

their time in coming to terms with the teaching and curricular demands of their new classes that they have had little time left to support the headteacher in the management of the school. Their overall effectiveness has thus been severely limited, and individual responsibilities, for co-ordinating mathematics for example, have been satisfactorily rather than well managed.

70 The system of delegation to other senior staff is satisfactory. The 'teams' of teachers from classes of a similar age group are well led by senior staff, who form an overall satisfactory senior management team with the headteacher. Team leaders work closely with colleagues in planning work to make sure that parallel classes cover the same range of activities. This does not always reflect the diverse ranges of ability found in different classes, however, and occasionally leads to work that lacks challenge and is aimed too much at 'the middle' of the class. The quality of subject leadership and management is very good in English, science, and information and communication technology, good in religious education and history, and satisfactory in all other subjects. The co-ordination of assessment arrangements and the management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs, are strengths of the school. The extent and effectiveness of delegation to co-ordinators vary as the school is still developing its systems. It is particularly strong in English, in which strong leadership is combined with effective systems for monitoring and evaluating standards across the whole school.

71 The governing body is committed and increasingly effective in fulfilling its legal and other responsibilities, in supporting the school, monitoring its progress and being a central part of its planned future. Its own 'amalgamation' has been successful. The chair of governors is very aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and works closely with the headteacher. He is ably supported by an enthusiastic vice-chair and by other governors. They have a growing understanding of the school through their meetings, visits to the school and involvement in monitoring the long-term improvement plan. The governing body's systems are effective, and appropriate responsibilities are delegated to the various committees. These do not have formal terms of reference, however, which might lead to confusion over the exact extent of their roles.

72 Senior staff have started to make good use of the training that showed them how to lead a self-evaluating school and develop the quality of teaching. A good start has been made in monitoring and evaluating the standards of teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy with regular classroom observations and a termly scrutiny of the work of identified pupils in mathematics and English from each class. The system is being extended so that all subject co-ordinators will have had a regular opportunity to observe lessons in their own subjects both within the school and in local schools where there is proven good practice. There is a well organised system of reporting standards across the curriculum that brings together the assessments from each year group and is used by the headteacher to measure attainment across the school and as the basis for deciding priorities for improvement. The arrangements for formally reviewing teachers' performance are well established. The formal arrangements for monitoring the work of teaching assistants are effective and help to increase job satisfaction and raise standards.

73 The school improvement plan is a substantial document that brings together the school's analysis of its current strengths and weaknesses and its plans for future development. It identifies clear targets for improvement, and contains understandable and measurable criteria for governors and staff to use in evaluating how well things are going. Resources, including time and money, are identified clearly. There is a strong sense of commitment to the school's continued development, although its ability to move forward as fast as it would like is limited by current restraints on the effectiveness of the deputy and assistant headteacher. The governing body exercises proper oversight of the budget, links it to the improvement plan and is fully involved with long-term planning. Governors are aware of the importance of ensuring that the school consults staff and parents about particular matters and obtains resources at a competitive price. It uses them effectively to meet its aims. It compares its performance with that of other schools locally and nationally. Despite its high costs, when compared to other schools the school gives satisfactory value for money.

74 The headteacher has very good financial understanding and manages all aspects of the school budget effectively. Spending is allocated to agreed headings within the school improvement

plan. Not all subject co-ordinators have a delegated budget, and the sense of 'bidding' for funds that exists amongst some teachers limits their understanding of the school's policy that all spending is against agreed criteria. Grants are allocated very carefully, and the effectiveness of their spending is carefully monitored. The school makes appropriate use of new technology and office staff have been trained in the efficient use of a range of computer software. Staff and pupils use a digital camera to record visits and activities. Internal communication systems are very limited for such an extensive site, and administrative staff spend too much time physically looking for the headteacher when she is out and about around the school. Good systems make sure that administrative staff deal effectively with day-to-day matters and keep the bureaucratic demands placed on the headteacher to a minimum. However, it is inappropriate for the same member of the office staff to initiate orders and check goods into the school when they are delivered.

75 After a period of high turnover and frequent use of temporary staff during the initial period of amalgamation, the school now has a good number of experienced and qualified teachers to teach all aspects of the National Curriculum and religious education. They are helped by teaching assistants, who make a significant contribution to the good standards achieved within the school. Staff development, appraisal and induction of new staff are organised and carried out effectively.

76 The school stands on a very large site and comprises the buildings of the former infant and junior schools. Great efforts have been made to join the two buildings together by the creation of a 'linking' corridor and much successful work has been done to ensure that the interior is clean, bright and well decorated. Recent developments include a computer suite and library; classrooms are mostly of a good size and there are several general purpose teaching rooms. Overall, accommodation is good. However, the fabric of the buildings is very expensive to maintain in a satisfactory condition and the running costs are extremely high. These have been some of the factors contributing to the recent decision, in principle, to build a new school.

77 The school has a broadly satisfactory range of resources for the teaching of all subjects. However, there are no computers in the classrooms for the seven to eleven year old pupils and this severely limits the use of information and communication technology in all subjects. There is also a lack of large play equipment and a separate play area for the reception classes.

78 The co-ordinator for special educational needs provides strong leadership. The headteacher has managed the systems efficiently during the recent absence of the incumbent. The substantive post holder is now embarked on updating the policy to meet the requirements of the new code of practice. The co-ordinator has a clear view of the most effective way forward. This includes regularising the records keeping of teaching assistants, with a fundamental emphasis on evaluation of progress rather than work done. The co-ordinator is assured of co-operation, since teachers at Alderman Leach are determined to do the best they can for all pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

79 The headteacher and governing body should:

- raise standards in the reception classes and in design and technology for pupils in Year 1 to Year 2 and in geography across the school; (paragraphs 21, 38, 137 and 143)
- improve the match of work to pupils' level of attainment in all subjects. (paragraph 28)
- improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher; (paragraph 69)

In addition to the key issues above, the school should also consider in its action plan:

- *the development of information and communication technology across the curriculum (paragraph 155); and
- improving the quality of teaching where it is unsatisfactory in Year 3 (paragraph 29 and 167)

** Already recognised by the school as requiring action.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	80
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	50

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	11	32	31	3	1	0
Percentage	3	14	40	39	4	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	387
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	67

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	79

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	22	25	47

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	19	22
	Girls	25	25	24
	Total	45	44	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (n/a)	94 (n/a)	98 (n/a)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	19	21
	Girls	23	23	25
	Total	41	42	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (n/a)	89 (n/a)	98 (n/a)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	25	30	55

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	25	25
	Girls	22	26	30
	Total	43	51	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (n/a)	93 (n/a)	100 (n/a)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	24	25
	Girls	23	24	28
	Total	45	48	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (n/a)	87 (n/a)	96 (n/a)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	367
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.3
Average class size	29.8

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	129

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	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	796702
Total expenditure	827311
Expenditure per pupil	2132
Balance brought forward from previous year	107074
Balance carried forward to next year	76465

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	388
Number of questionnaires returned	109
Percentage return rate	28

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	40	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	44	2	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	60	6	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	55	16	5	0
The teaching is good.	47	50	0	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	49	16	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	31	14	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	49	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	25	52	12	5	6
The school is well led and managed.	21	47	9	16	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	59	1	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	41	12	8	7

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The parents raised concerns about homework, the leadership and management of the school and the range of activities provided outside of lessons. The amount and use of homework is satisfactory and broadly as would be seen in most other schools. Following the amalgamation, the headteacher and the chair of the governing body have provided a clear vision of how the school should move forward and have provided effective leadership. There is still some refinement of the management structure necessary to ensure overall management is improved. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. These are a mixture of sporting and cultural activities which are well attended and much enjoyed by the pupils.

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

80 Strengths:

- *the way in which the school is developing the curriculum;*
- *relationships; and*
- *the start made on assessment.*

Weaknesses:

- *inconsistency in the quality of teaching between the classes ranging from unsatisfactory to good; and*
- *provision for outside play.*

81 Children in the reception classes achieve satisfactorily because the curriculum is providing a sound foundation to their learning. In particular it promotes the development of the children's language skills which, along with most other areas of their development, are below average when they enter the school. Though the children make steady progress they are unlikely to attain the early learning goals for their age by the end of the reception year other than in mathematical development and personal and social development. In the former aspect they enter at a generally higher level and make sound progress. They make good gains in their personal and social development as a result of the good quality teaching in this area.

82 The quality of teaching is sound in the majority of areas of learning. It is good in personal and social development. It is, however, inconsistent between classes and in particular in the teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world, in which the planning, organisation and methods used are at times insufficiently structured. On occasion teaching is unsatisfactory in mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. On the other hand, there is teaching of good quality marked by the best daily lessons in literacy and mathematics and the way in which teaching assistance of good quality is deployed to small group work, providing extra opportunities for the development of the children's language. The systems for assessment are becoming established. They are used well and link appropriately to those used in the rest of the school.

Personal, social and emotional development

83 The good provision is underpinned by effective teaching. A range of interesting activities enables children to make simple choices and develop their independence. The classrooms are well set out with labelled resources so that children can choose and return items independently. Day-to-day routines are well established so children know what is expected of them. Children take care of others new to the classes by showing them the ropes and congratulating them on their achievements. Children take pride in their work and like to share completed work with the class who are appreciative of the efforts of others.

84 Children make good gains in working with others, first alongside each other and, as they mature, working in pairs and small groups. Most children can be trusted to work sensibly without direct supervision. A minority forget the teachers' expectations of them when they play outside the classroom and at these times need constant reminders which takes the teachers' attention and time away from the teaching of others and reduces the pace of learning for all.

Communication, language and literacy

Speaking and listening

85 Many children need considerable help to develop appropriate language skills. Children's

vocabulary is not rich and teachers and other adults have to work hard to extend very basic conversation so that concepts can be developed across the curriculum. Higher attainers quickly grasp new words and build them into their discussions but average and lower attaining children need much practice in speaking. Much of their talk is mundane and they have a limited background of general knowledge to draw on. For example, when blowing bubbles in the air for the first time a group of average attaining children found great difficulty in describing what happened to the bubbles. They obviously felt a sense of wonder as the sun glistened on the bubbles as they rose skywards but the resulting poetry lacked depth and depended too much on the help of adults. Children enjoy their tasks such as listening to stories, joining in rhymes and talking about their work. A small proportion forget to take turns and forget the conventions of listening to others and staff patiently and firmly give reminders and set good examples paying much attention to what it is the children have to say.

Reading

86 Children are unlikely to reach the early learning goals in their reading but make sound progress and enjoy their reading. Parents play a supportive role in helping their children to read at home and this is organised well by the school. High attaining children are already working at levels just above those typically expected for their age. They are confident and mature readers and understand that some books 'tell the truth' while others contain 'made-up stories'. Middle attainers recognise some key words and use letter sounds to attempt to work out simple yet unknown words. They identify with the characters in the books and speak of them as real people. Children who need a lot of extra help in reading offer simple views of the stories they read and take confidence from the repetitive story line.

87 The teaching of reading is satisfactory. It is structured appropriately so that children gradually build up their understanding of letter sounds and the shapes of words. Staff know the children well but the records of children's reading are insufficiently diagnostic and so adults have an insufficient written record of how well individuals are reading or what needs to be taught next.

Writing

88 Children make sound headway in writing because they have daily practice at formal writing and a series of informal opportunities to practise their writing through role play and through using an area set aside for writing letters, notes, lists and names. Two terms ago higher attainers, on entry to school, made attempts at copying under adult script and produced ill-formed letters. Now their handwriting is well formed and consistent in size. They mostly remember to leave spaces between words and are able to write one or two simple sentences independently. The handwriting of middle attainers is less consistent in form and held back to some extent through a pencil grip which often goes uncorrected. They copy underneath or from an adult script and are beginning to write some words independently. Lower attainers have progressed from making extremely faint marks on paper to copying under adult script, though some of their letters are incorrectly formed.

89 Children's writing is on the whole unimaginative and this reflects the lack of richness in their spoken vocabulary. A contributing factor is also the way in which the school day is timetabled leaving too little time for imaginative story telling. The quality of teaching varies widely between the two classes. At best, the teaching assistants are deployed very well to work with groups, though they are less well deployed when the class teacher is speaking to the whole class, as in the beginning and concluding plenary of the daily literacy lesson. Relationships are good and this means that children are ready to contribute and to try their best with their writing. The national strategy for literacy has been introduced through a stepped approach, which has set the children up well for the slightly more formal work in Year 1. Basic skills are taught soundly and often well.

Mathematical development

90 Children make sound progress from knowing a little about numbers when they start school to being able, at best to count accurately to 20, to use simple addition and to have a basic

understanding of shape and space. Middle attaining children are able to count on from a given number within 20 and to make accurate sets of numbers up to ten. Those who need extra help are at a low level of understanding, often counting inaccurately and recording numerals incorrectly with, in one class, a degree of unfinished work.

91 The gains in children's understanding of mathematics are made because the teaching satisfactorily implements a daily mathematics lesson which provides the structure and opportunities for counting and 'playing' with numbers, time set aside to practise using them and a final part to the lessons which draws well on what children have learnt. Resources are set out invitingly and the tasks are effectively supported by adults so that mathematical language is promoted well. The best lessons are pacy, lively and well focused and children become engrossed in their work. At these times they make good gains. This level of learning is not always the case; at other times some staff are less well organised and as a result the pace and consequent learning are not as good and on occasion unsatisfactory.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

92 Too little use is made of the outside environment to promote children's curiosity and engage their senses. When it is used, as for playing mathematical games, the children gain a lot from the space and freedom that it provides. The planning for teaching children about the world in which we live is narrow, and though learning objectives are clear in those activities led by the teacher, the plans for the supporting activities lack clarity. These unsatisfactory teaching methods and organisation result in those children not directly engaged with an adult marking time. This was the case when children were investigating objects that sink and float. The majority of children were insufficiently challenged and wasted much time because the expectations of the adult were insufficiently high. When this happens children become inattentive and on occasion misbehave.

93 Tasks are planned to broaden children's experiences and horizons and to encourage their independence. The best teaching provides interesting activities that engage the children's inquisitive nature. For example, tasks that take an investigate approach with a range of materials such as sand, water and malleable materials. Children have an underdeveloped understanding of similarities and differences and need much help to classify objects such as those that might float or sink. Children can make simple models but are insufficiently skilled at adapting their efforts. For example, when making vehicles out of magnetic bricks children needed a great deal of adult help to improve their first attempts. Children are adept at using computers because they have sufficient time to practise and because the tasks are linked to their other work such as when they match shapes on the screen or make pictures. In this they are likely to reach the levels expected.

Creative development

94 Children acquire an increasing range of skills in painting, drawing and modelling and achieve soundly over time. They take great delight in the activities, as when a group gleefully explained how they used a drinking straw to blow bubbles in paint and took an imprint from the bursting bubbles. The resulting patterns and colours intrigued them. Children's observational skills are lower than would normally be expected. For example, in their drawings of boats on water they manage to get the feel for the boats' movement on water but the detail is sparse, even though they have a good range of books for reference. Much of their work is stereotypical; for example, drawings of houses with four windows and a door or paintings of daffodils with incorrectly shaped leaves fail to provide the detail to bring out the essence of individual observations.

95 The quality of provision for role-play is inconsistent between classes. At best, as in a travel agent's shop children use their imagination well. They use telephones to practise their speaking and listening and look at maps to plan a journey to Skegness. They practise their writing and apply their knowledge of counting to pay for the holiday. The quality of the play is quite dependent on an adult's intervention to bring about gains in learning. A strength in the development of children's creativity is in the teaching of music, which is lively and well judged for the age of the children. This

was the case, for example, when children contrasted traditional jazz with a slower, sad folk song. They were well led by the teaching through simple rhyme and action to internalise the rhythm. All joined in happily and willingly discussed how the music made them feel. One child remarked that the sad music reminded him of Aladdin's genie having to return to the lamp. The session provided a calm and enjoyable end to the day and one child sneaked back to replay the music for all to listen to!

Physical development

96 Strengths in the teaching are in the way in which good use is made of the school hall to teach basic skills of catching and throwing through a challenging step-by-step approach. As a result children make sound gains and improve their awareness of how to use space and be conscious of their own and others' safety. Weaknesses are in the lack of use of the outside and the lack of resources to provide children with time to practise and hone their skills of climbing, jumping, pedalling and working together collaboratively. Too little opportunity is provided for children to work informally and imaginatively out of doors.

97 Most children can follow simple instructions, though those who need extra help watch others closely and take their cue from them. High attainers can run fast and safely, darting in and out of other children. Average attainers can throw a beanbag underarm but their hand and eye coordination is still developing and they often inaccurately gauge the speed and angle of their throws making it difficult for a partner to catch the beanbag. Children's skills of manipulating small tools, pencils and scissors are developing soundly because skills are on the whole taught appropriately and plenty of opportunities are given for children to practise, for example, cutting along straight and wavy lines and cutting out simple shapes. Children have a good attitude to their work, behave well and enjoy using the range of resources offered to improve their dexterity and co-ordination.

ENGLISH

98 *There are many strengths in the school's provision for the teaching of English. These contribute to the high standards attained by pupils and to their good achievement. These strengths include:*

- *the successful implementation and use of the National Literacy Strategy;*
- *the good quality of the teaching;*
- *planning which ensures that pupils build securely on previous work;*
- *the quality, quantity, range and use of resources;*
- *the use of assessment to set targets for improvement for individuals, groups and the whole school;*
- *the use of literacy in other subjects;*
- *recent improvements in the organisation of the library; and*
- *the leadership and management by the co-ordinator.*

There are also some weaknesses which the school needs to address in order to raise attainment. These include:

- *the inaccuracy of spelling in pupils' independent writing;*
- *the limited use of information communication technology in English;*
- *inconsistencies in the presentation of pupils' work; and*
- *in general work that is not matched sufficiently closely to pupils' attainment.*

99 By the end of Year 2 pupils' attainment is above what would normally be expected for children aged seven in speaking and listening, reading and writing. This is generally in line with the results of the 2001 National Curriculum tests in reading and writing and teacher assessments in speaking and listening. It is an improvement at the higher level. By the end of Year 6 pupils'

attainment in all aspects of English is above what would normally be expected for children aged eleven. This is an improvement on the results of the 2001 National Curriculum tests overall. It is also an improvement on the proportion of pupils achieving at the higher level.

100 The school has worked hard in order to improve pupils' performance. It has identified schoolwide areas in need of improvement, such as aspects of writing and reading, and has provided staff with appropriate training in order to extend their skills and knowledge. The school has used its assessments in order to set targets for pupils to reach and has provided additional support for those whose achievement needed boosting. The school also takes advantage of opportunities to make pupils' learning interesting. For example, authors and theatre groups come into school to work with pupils. A significant factor in the improvements made by the school is the quality of teaching, which is good overall with almost half the teaching being very good and occasionally excellent.

101 The school places a high priority on the development of speaking and listening skills and ensures that opportunities are clearly planned. This helps to ensure that pupils develop confidence and build on existing skills. For example, in the very good teaching in Year 1 pupils listened attentively and used words such as "return" and "survive" when they extracted information from a shared text to describe how to care for frogs. This was enhanced because the teacher used the appropriate vocabulary and encouraged them in its use. Pupils for whom English is a second language make good progress in the development of their speaking and listening skills because they are well supported. This enables them to understand the language and ideas of other subjects of the curriculum such as mathematics and history.

102 Because teachers control their classes well, noise levels are usually conducive to the development of good listening skills. This is why pupils in Year 2, for example, were able to respond clearly and carefully to the teacher's questions about feelings associated with darkness. Because relationships are usually good most pupils have the confidence to talk to teachers and converse with others. This helps to extend the fluency of their speech and enables them to talk and listen in a broadening range of situations. For example, in the excellent teaching of a mixed class of pupils from Year 1 and 2, they discussed together in pairs how they would bring expression to their reading of text. Because the teacher's subject knowledge is very good and because pupils were managed very well, more able pupils in Year 5 achieved highly when they used standard English and organised arguments well in a debate about fox hunting. Because speaking and listening skills are valued pupils generally grow in poise and confidence. For example, a lower achieving pupil in Year 6 confidently discussed and described events and characters in the text to a visitor. These skills are further enhanced by the provision of such extra curricular activities as the drama club.

103 Teachers have a good understanding of how to teach basic skills in reading. By the time they reach Year 2, lower achieving pupils make confident use of a range of strategies such as using letter sounds, picture cues and meaning when meeting new or unfamiliar words. Teachers generally have high expectations. For example, in Year 2 care was taken to remind pupils of how speech marks are linked with expression and intonation. This improved their skills in reading with intonation. Higher achieving pupils were challenged to read accurately and fluently, making use of deductive skills in order to clarify meaning. Teachers generally make good use of the national strategy for literacy in order to ensure that pupils build securely on work that has gone before. For example, in Year 1 the teacher made very good use of the shared reading session to remind pupils of previous work on the use of the contents page and then extended their skills in reading in order to extract information. This is also enhanced by the careful records teachers keep of pupils' progress and because pupils regularly take books home and parents are involved with their reading.

104 Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language, make good progress in reading. This is because pupils are helped to choose books which are well suited to their abilities and teachers ensure that reading is enjoyable. This enables pupils in Year 3, for example to discuss preferences in their reading and read accurately and with enjoyment. A Year 6 pupil of average ability explained to a visitor that she preferred reading to watching television: "Because you can use your imagination in reading." By the time they

are eleven most pupils read accurately and fluently. Higher achievers make consistent and confident use of inferential and deductive skills in their understanding of events, ideas and characters. This is helped by the effective use made of guided reading sessions as part of the literacy strategy and by the provision of a wide range of interesting books. Most older pupils know how to use the library classification system, use glossaries and develop skills in skimming and scanning in order to locate information. Recent improvements in the organisation of the library and the teaching about the use of the library and research skills enhance pupils' work in this area.

105 A significant factor in the good progress most pupils make in their writing is that teachers generally expect high standards. For example, in Year 1 the teacher's very close attention to detail ensured that pupils formed their letters clearly and shaped them well. She ensured that they were sitting comfortably and gripping their pencils appropriately when practising the starting points and patterns of the letters. This helped them to produce handwriting which was clear and well formed. By the end of Year 2 most pupils' handwriting is accurately formed and consistently sized. By the time they are eleven most pupils present their work neatly, using fluent, joined and legible handwriting, although the handwriting of less able pupils is sometimes less fluent. However, some teachers do not ensure that all presentation is of the same standard. For example, in Year 4 it is difficult to read some pupils' work because the handwriting is not clear.

106 Teachers generally use careful explanations and conduct lessons at a brisk pace so that pupils know clearly what is expected and work hard. This helped pupils in Year 5, for example, to sustain their concentration and work rigorously in extending their skills in the use of complex sentences and clauses. An important factor in the high standards of most pupils' written work is the quality of teachers' marking. Work is marked regularly and is usually very supportive and provides pupils with useful advice on how they might improve their work. For example, the teacher congratulated a pupil in Year 6 on the organisation of sentences but indicated that the persuasive writing might be improved if the sentences were shorter. Another significant factor in the school's generally high standards is that it has identified, from its assessments, aspects of work to be improved. For example, teachers have identified the need for, and helped to improve, the structure and content of written work. This is why pupils in Year 6 write well structured stories, using interesting and apt vocabularies on the resolution of a dilemma. This is also enhanced by the close linking of every day work with individual targets for improvement.

107 Teachers ensure that pupils learn spelling rules and practise their spelling regularly. For example, in Year 4 pupils increased their accuracy in spelling because the teacher presented the rules for spelling a range of suffixes in a lively and interesting way. Although standards of spelling are generally satisfactory by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, some teachers do not ensure that spelling skills are transferred consistently from spelling lessons to pupils' independent writing. Because teachers make good use of the literacy strategy most pupils develop accurate use of punctuation. Similarly they use a wide range of styles of writing for different audiences and purposes. For example, pupils in Year 2 write letters, poems, and descriptions. Children in Year 6 write dialogue and produce persuasive and imaginative writing and recounts.

108 When teachers prepare work which is suited to the different abilities of pupils within the class, pupils usually make very good progress. For example, in Year 1 the teacher provided different levels of work for different ability groups, with support for lower achieving pupils from the teaching assistant. This ensured that they were challenged to increase their knowledge of consonant clusters at their own level. This led to very good learning. Similarly, in a Year 5 class of pupils with average ability, work was prepared at different levels of challenge according to their attainment. This led to very good progress in their understanding of punctuation marks and clauses. However, although older pupils are arranged in classes according to their levels of attainment for the teaching of English, work is not generally prepared which is suited to the differing ability groups within these classes. This leads to missed opportunities to challenge these pupils to further extend their learning.

109 The school generally makes good use of English in the other subjects. For example, in Year 2 pupils use appropriate mathematical language such as "ascending" and "descending" so that their understanding of number is increased and their vocabularies are extended. In music lessons

teachers generally insist on pupils developing their listening skills. In religious education pupils in Year 6 write accounts of myths and fables, extending their understanding of creation stories. Although pupils use information communication technology as part of their work in English, for example by using story tapes and in Year 3 rewriting traditional stories using word processing, the use of computers in English is limited.

110 Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator has a very clear understanding of the educational direction to be taken by the subject and very good subject knowledge. Teaching, learning and planning are very effectively monitored in order to help to raise standards.

MATHEMATICS

111 *Strengths:*

- *the National Strategy for Numeracy has been implemented effectively;*
- *mental arithmetic is developed well throughout the school;*
- *systematic lesson planning and regular practice in solving problems;*
- *pupils involve themselves fully in question and answer sessions and respond well to challenging tasks; and*
- *targets are set regularly.*

Weaknesses:

- *insufficient variation of tasks to cater for the different levels of attainment in the class; and*
- *lack of planned opportunities to use information and communication technology.*

112 Results in national tests for pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2001 were above the national average particularly in the aspects of shape, space and measures. Performance of both boys and girls at the age of 11 was well above the national average. It also compared very favourably with that of schools serving pupils with backgrounds similar to those at Alderman Leach.

113 Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have ample opportunities to practise techniques in mental arithmetic. As a result, they are beginning to appreciate number patterns. The emphasis on number work means that most pupils can, for example, subtract a single digit from two digit numbers. Teachers recognise that pupils need to consolidate their knowledge so they provide a lot of practice in specific skills in the four rules of number. In a very good lesson involving pupils in both year groups, children were readily counting forwards and backwards from 50 to 110 in fives. All pupils recognise simple fractions such as a quarter or a half and know the difference between odd and even numbers. They are keen to learn, and this enthusiasm helps to promote the sound progress they are making. They work willingly through their practice exercises, which reinforce their understanding of concepts. Pupils' ability to round numbers efficiently is helping their calculations. Estimation techniques of higher attainers are developing well. Presentation is usually neat but this is not the case in the mixed Year 1 and Year 2 class, which reflects the changes in teachers.

114 This exposure to constant practice in all the required elements of the national strategy is leading to sound progress. By the end of Year 2, almost all pupils are reaching expected levels. About one in five is exceeding expectations. The difference in standards from those attained in the national tests last year is because the teachers are only now becoming accustomed to the particular age range.

115 Throughout Year 3 to Year 6, pupils respond well to challenging tasks. Teachers continue to concentrate on the development of skills in number. Pupils' consequent ability to manipulate figures is a significant factor in their successful approach to problem solving. For example, less able pupils in Year 4 are able to calculate a range of costs and prices when analysing a receipt. Almost all pupils have a secure knowledge of multiplication tables by the time they reach Year 5. This gives

them confidence when tackling more complex work in Year 6. The understanding of decimals and fractions develops at a slower pace. By Year 6, however, most use decimals to at least two places and readily convert fractions into percentages. The comprehensive scheme of work ensures that everyone can, for example, use line graphs. Pupils have a sound knowledge of symmetry and understand the need for inverse operations. Mental calculation remains a strength and high attaining 11 year olds can quickly work out in their heads 25% of 10,060. Teachers regularly insist that their pupils calculate and estimate to supplement their efficient use of calculators.

116 The continued emphasis on accurate number work and consistently high expectations is leading to above average standards when pupils leave the school. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and have skills that equip them well for their studies at secondary school.

117 There are many positive features about the teaching throughout the school. The teaching is sound in Year 1 to Year 2 overall. A good, imaginative lesson taught by a supply teacher engaged all pupils and used a range of strategies to maintain high expectations as they explored number patterns. The teaching is stronger in Year 4 to Year 6. An excellent lesson in Year 4 ensured that pupils continually built on number skills up to 100. The partnership between pupils and teacher generated an excitement about learning. Teachers are particularly good at involving a wide range of pupils in discussions about their learning objectives for the day. The systematic use of questioning in most lessons ensures a secure reinforcement and extension of knowledge. Teachers regularly use mathematical terms when talking to children. This impacts well on the broadening the pupils' vocabulary and means that explanations are clear and understood. For example in a very effective Year 6 lesson, pupils with learning difficulties were able to explain very clearly the operations needed in long division.

118 When the teaching was unsatisfactory, as was the case in one lesson, explanations lacked clarity and sometimes confused pupils. The pace was slow and pupils' learning lost momentum. When year groups are set by the pupils' levels of attainment, there is a preponderance of whole-class tasks which often do not challenge the high attainers well enough. The quality of marking is generally good and teachers often point out what pupils need to do to improve.

119 The above average standards being achieved result from the systematic planning of lessons, strong relationships in the classroom, and sequential development of skills. These combine to create a very positive atmosphere in which pupils make significant contributions. Classroom management is generally unobtrusive. Teachers discuss topics with their classes and often create a genuine sense of discovery. Pupils love the challenge and recognise achievement in their classmates. A Year 6 group spontaneously applauded when a pupil performed particularly well in a test.

120 Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to use and apply their numeracy skills in other subjects such as science and design and technology. Information and communication technology is under-represented in mathematics lessons. When they were in the computer suite, a Year 6 class used spreadsheets well. However, there are few planned opportunities to supplement skills using current technology.

121 The monitoring of teaching is insufficiently rigorous leading to inconsistency in the quality of teaching. The current tick-box system is too simplistic and does not provide a focus for development. There are insufficient opportunities for teachers to share good practice. The teaching assistants provide valuable support in mathematics lessons. They know the needs of identified pupils and target them effectively. All have been trained to implement the Springboard Programme. Booster classes provide targeted support at key times of the year.

SCIENCE

122 *The key strengths in the subject are:*

- *the strong emphasis given to the subject within the overall curriculum;*
- *the interesting range of practical and investigative activities, which make the subject interesting for the pupils; and*
- *the influence of the co-ordinator in promoting science.*

The most significant weakness is that:

- *lesson planning does not take sufficient account of the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment.*

123 Standards by the end of Year 2 are about average, though pupils achieve well because their levels of knowledge and understanding when they enter Year 1 are generally below average. Results of teacher assessments in 2001 were above average, although inspection judgement of pupils in the current Year 2 class indicates that standards this year are not likely to be quite as high in 2002, partly because of staffing changes. The present Year 6 pupils are not attaining quite as highly as in the last year's national tests because of the school's focus on English. Nevertheless, as a result of good teaching and a well-planned curriculum pupils make good progress and achieve well reaching above average standards.

124 The quality of teaching is good overall for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and good for those in Years 4, 5 and 6. There is a noticeable dip in the quality of pupils' work in Year 3. Here the volume of work covered by pupils is not so extensive as in other classes and there is less evidence of progress made over time in their written work. The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 reflects the staffing changes that have taken place in the past year. The quality of teaching in the upper school is considerably influenced by the secure subject knowledge of the teachers.

125 Throughout the school, teachers place a good emphasis on the use of correct scientific terminology, which pupils use as a matter of course. This helps them to describe their experiences and observations clearly, either orally or in written form. There is a good emphasis on practical and investigative activities, which makes the subject interesting for the pupils so they are keen to learn and which effectively develops their scientific skills in real situations. In Year 2, for example, pupils explored the school grounds to locate different habitats for tiny creatures. There was great excitement when they discovered creatures such as wood lice or spiders and they were soon able to recognise the different environments favoured by specific creatures. The same lesson was observed in two parallel classes, but one was judged to be better because of the teacher's very high expectations of behaviour, which ensured that all pupils were attentive and learning. In the less effective lesson class management was not so secure and pupils became over-excited and boisterous at times, which resulted in some inattentiveness and loss of time when pupils were admonished. In both lessons there were clear learning outcomes and the practical activity was planned very well, ensuring that pupils were successful in finding enough creatures to observe.

126 A distinctive feature of the better teaching at the top end of the school is the good subject knowledge and obvious enthusiasm of the teachers. The latter is transmitted to the pupils, who consequently have good attitudes to the subject; indeed, some older pupils cited science as their favourite subject. For example, through an interesting investigative activity, very clear exposition, probing questions that made pupils think hard and impeccable time management, pupils in Year 6 made very good gains in learning when they investigated solubility. The lesson was very successful because it was planned expertly with a very good range of well-chosen resources that ensured the experiment was conducted efficiently. Pupils responded maturely, using their knowledge to help them to give thoughtful answers to questions. The teacher was able to work with groups and individuals because the rest of the class worked independently, collaborating and co-operating well. The written task was pitched at three different levels of ability so that pupils were challenged appropriately. In another good lesson the teacher's energetic style and very good class management ensured that pupils gave careful consideration to the factors contributing to a fair test. They maintained their concentration well and learning was productive because of the level of challenge in the activity that required them to investigate the best materials to make ear muffs to

deaden sound.

127 A common shortcoming in the teaching is that lesson planning does not make sufficient allowance for the range of attainment represented in each class. In most lessons all pupils tackle the same task, as indicated in the medium-term plans, but there is no specific variation within tasks to give further challenge to higher attainers or to support those who need extra help. This means that often higher attainers are not fully challenged, while those who struggle with their work attempt tasks that are too difficult. Throughout the school there are good links with literacy and numeracy as pupils record their observations and data. Opportunities for them to use information and communication technology to support their studies in science are few and far between.

128 The subject is very well managed by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator who has a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. As a result of effective monitoring and practical support for staff, areas for improvement have been clearly identified and tackled and this is helping to improve standards. A good example of this is in the way in which a weakness in investigative work has been improved. This feature has now been incorporated into the planning and there is better and more frequent provision for pupils to develop practical skills as teachers' confidence increases. Resources for the subject have recently been re-organised into helpful collections of items for each topic. This facilitates efficiency because items are accessible and in good condition.

ART AND DESIGN

129 *Strengths include:*

- *the quality of teaching in the lessons seen;*
- *the quality and range of resources;*
- *planning to ensure that children build on work that has gone before;*
- *use of art in other subjects of the curriculum.*

Weaknesses include:

- *inconsistencies in the use of sketch books;*
- *infrequent assessment; and*
- *gaps in the frequency with which the subject is taught.*

130 During the inspection it was possible to see only one lesson in Year 1 and so no judgement can be made of the overall quality of teaching by the end of Year 2. The overall quality of teaching for the older pupils is satisfactory. In the aspects of art and design seen, attainment overall is in line with what is expected of pupils aged seven and eleven. A minority achieves standards which are higher than this.

131 In the one lesson seen in Year 1 the quality of teaching was good and pupils' learning was correspondingly good. Because pupils had completed work recently the teacher was able to make good links with previous work in order to develop the pupils' skills in weaving and colour wrapping. Because of the teacher's good subject knowledge explanations were clear and most pupils produced pleasing pieces of work. Most pupils collaborated well in their weaving because relationships are good and the teacher had high expectations of their involvement and behaviour.

132 In the good teaching observed in Year 5, the teacher's good subject knowledge and clear explanations, helped pupils to extend their understanding of how to gather visual and other information in order to develop their ideas. The teacher had high expectations, which were used to challenge pupils to consider and experiment with pastel crayons to find ways in which different moods and feelings in aspects of the story of Pandora's Box might be represented visually. The use of appropriate vocabulary, such as "literal interpretation" and "blend" helped pupils to increase their understanding of the task and extended their vocabularies. Teachers generally control pupils well so that they behave well and sustain their concentration. For example, in a sound lesson in

Year 3, pupils worked well when not under the immediate supervision of the teacher. They produced carefully shaded sketches because the teacher demonstrated the skills soundly and she and the teaching assistant provided satisfactory encouragement and advice on how pupils might improve as they moved around the room.

133 The school makes good use of art in other subjects. This helps to extend pupils' skills in art and to increase their understanding of other subjects. Pupils in Year 1, for example, linked their pattern work closely to pattern in number. Year 2 pupils made close observational drawings of their scientific investigations and used a computer programme carefully to produce well-finished designs after the style of Mondrian. Pupils in Year 4 produced an interesting collage depicting life in a Kenyan village as part of their work in geography and Year 6 pupils used well finished illustrations to enhance their understanding of life in ancient Egypt.

134 When sketchbooks are used to produce preparatory sketches as part of a general theme, pupils often follow their work through to produce finished work of a high standard. For example, some pupils in Year 6 achieved very high standards in their work after the style of artists such as Picasso and Modigliani. This work was enhanced by the care taken in its display. In their sketchbooks Year 5 pupils carefully developed sketches of containers, resulting in pleasing pencil sketches. Sketchbooks are not used consistently in this way, often resulting in work which lacks continuity. However, some individual sketches show sound techniques and control of media. For example, pupils in Year 4 produced carefully finished crayon sketches of animals and human figures. There was little evidence of three-dimensional work, textiles or printing. Older pupils produced carefully finished coil pots but this work was not developed further. Within the limited amount of work seen there were some examples of pupils achieving at higher levels. For example, pupils in Year 2 produced detailed drawings and paintings of flowers. Year 4 pupils produced clear observational sketches after the style of Hokusai. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 produce well-proportioned and well-shaded sketches of a wide range of observed objects. The work of lower achieving pupils generally shows less control and less understanding of how to represent depth and proportion. Following work with an artist, pupils in Year 5 produced a very well finished mural depicting pupils at work. A great deal of collaborative effort had gone into the creation of this piece which was well recognised by its positioning in the school's entrance hall.

135 Across the school the proportion of time allocated to art is relatively small. In Year 1 and Year 2 pupils work on art and design throughout the year at frequent intervals. In contrast, art lessons for pupils in Year 3 to Year 6 often have gaps between them of half a term or more. The allocation and frequency of time inhibit continuity in the development of skills. For example, some Year 6 pupils were not sure about what work they had done previously and were unsure of the skills and tools used in clay and paintwork.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

136 *Strengths:*

- *standards improve in older classes to match those expected of 11 year olds.*

Weaknesses:

- *standards by the end of Year 2 are below the levels expected of seven-year-olds; progress is adversely affected by the gaps between blocks of work.*

137 Standards among the pupils in Year 2 are below those expected for their age. One of the Year 2 classes has had no lessons in the subject for over two terms and pupils have not had an opportunity to practise and develop their skills. The strict requirements of the National Curriculum are met, however, but overall progress between the ages of five and seven is unsatisfactory because of the teaching gap in Year 2.

138 Standards by the end of Year 6 are in line with those expected of 11 year-olds. Progress is

satisfactory in patches but is intermittent as timetable constraints mean that there are often considerable periods of time between blocks of work and pupils do not have enough opportunities to build consistently on the skills they have learned. Examples of past work and in folders indicate that pupils' work earlier in the year on 'shelters' was at expected standards. Pupils had researched the nature of a shelter carefully before designing their own models of a suitable shelter for the playground. Careful evaluations were made at each stage and after completion. Pupils knew how they would improve their design and techniques if they were to start again. Current work seen in Year 6 is of a satisfactory standard and indicates that pupils have a secure understanding of the principles and skills required for good design.

139 Pupils in Year 3 to Year 6 have completed an appropriate range of activities, including food technology. Very little use is made of information and communication technology as part of the design process, but pupils in Year 3 have recorded their research into favourite sandwich fillings using computer based tally sheets and graphs. Pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 understand how to make pop-up books and how to use cams to produce movement and these pupils have an appropriate understanding of the design and making stages. There was no evidence of evaluation.

140 It was possible to observe only one lesson. The quality of teaching was very good because the planning and preparation were detailed, and the resources stimulated the pupils' creative and intellectual interest. Pupils' contributions to a discussion about what made a 'good' slipper were valued by the teacher, which increased their involvement in the lesson and raised the standard of their understanding. Careful planning also meant that the tasks set for different groups within the class matched their abilities and enabled all pupils, including lower attainers and those with special educational needs, to be fully included in productive activities. Pupils understood the importance of a good slipper design and why each stage had to be evaluated carefully against agreed criteria for shape, durability, comfort and attractiveness.

GEOGRAPHY

141 *The key strengths in the subject are:*

- *the way in which pupils use their research skills to investigate topics for themselves; and*
- *effective links with literacy and numeracy.*

The most significant weaknesses are:

- *standards throughout the school are below those typically seen because of the organisation of the curriculum - there are sometimes long gaps between topics; and*
- *pupils do not use information and communication technology to supplement their work in geography.*

142 Much of the work in geography is undertaken as a topic and presented in attractive booklets. There are good examples of this type of work in pockets throughout the school. In Year 6, for example, the work on mountain environments includes an appropriate level of factual content on such aspects as erosion and terrains. It presents good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in the retrieval of information from the Internet and reference books, making a strong link with literacy. In some classes, however, there is much less recorded work in the subject. In general there is insufficient emphasis on the development of the acquisition of geographical skills through geographical enquiry and fieldwork. Information and communication technology is underused to enhance the geography curriculum, although literacy and, to a lesser extent, numeracy are both used effectively.

143 Although national guidance has been used as a framework for constructing the curriculum, the framework is not yet complete. It is planned in such a way that there are sometimes lengthy periods of time in which no geography is taught in some classes, and this has an adverse impact on the continuity of pupils' learning. In Year 5, for example, pupils study geography for only two half terms, leaving a substantial gap between topics before the geography curriculum is resumed again. Similarly, in Year 2 pupils study geography in the second half of the autumn term, but do not re-visit it again until the second half of the summer term. Consequently pupils do not build up their skills

and knowledge in a steady progression over time or build on their learning in a regular pattern. As a result, by the time they are eleven, not only are there gaps in their knowledge, but also their skills lack the level of sophistication typically seen for their age. Sketch maps produced by pupils in Year 6, for example, to illustrate the location of litterbins were more reminiscent of much younger pupils. A significant advantage of the current planning is that it ensures that pupils in parallel classes are taught the same things. However, there are times when the learning objectives identified provide too little substance for anything other than a superficial lesson, whilst others, such as 'to be able to make a map' are far too substantial for just one lesson.

144 The quality of teaching of pupils in Years 3 to 6 is sound overall. It was not possible to make a judgement on the quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 as no lessons were observed. In a good lesson in Year 6 pupils developed their enquiry skills well when addressing a real problem - that of litter in the school. Because of the relevance of the task and the interesting way in which the teacher presented the material they made good progress in developing their understanding of the need to ask open questions when compiling a questionnaire to gather data. The lesson incorporated lots of brief activities to maintain the momentum and to focus pupils' thinking, such as brainstorming their ideas on what constitutes pollution. Their responses indicated a good level of knowledge and understanding of the issue and they showed considerable enthusiasm for the task. The introduction to a practical lesson with another Year 6 group on a similar theme was satisfactory but less successful in taking learning forward because the pace was slower and failed to reinforce the geographical elements of the lesson sufficiently. In lessons in each of the Year 4 classes the curriculum content as prescribed by the medium term plans was not sufficiently well supported by imaginative activities devised by the teachers to stimulate the interest of the pupils fully or to challenge higher attainers, and so the gains made in learning were minimal and some pupils lacked motivation.

145 The subject has not been given a high priority since the schools amalgamated as emphasis has, rightly, been placed on raising standards in English and mathematics. As a result there has been little staff training to enhance the skills of staff and raise the profile of the subject. There have been several changes in the co-ordination of the subject, which has also hindered its development. The current co-ordinator has only recently taken over responsibility for geography and is still becoming familiar with the demands of the curriculum. Monitoring has had very little impact because it is still at a very early stage.

HISTORY

146 *Strengths in the subject are:*

- *the enthusiasm engendered in the subject by the teaching;*
- *the good use made of educational visits to enhance lessons; and*
- *the interesting range of activities in some classes.*

The most significant weakness in the subject is:

- *superficiality in some of the work.*

147 Pupils' attainment in Years 1 and 2 is lower than average mainly because the children start school with below average levels of knowledge and understanding of the world and there is a lot of ground to be made up. Although they attained standards typical for their age in individual lessons in Year 2, when judged over time standards fall short of expectation because of the pupils' often limited recollections of what they have learned in previous lessons and the small amount of work recorded in their books. Pupils in Year 2, however, have good recall of events and characters in history, describing graphically their work about the fire of London and Guy Fawkes. Pupils in Year 6 attain the expected level because they have studied a broader range of topics and remember much of what they have learned, speaking knowledgeably and enthusiastically about their topics on the Egyptians, Vikings and Romans for example.

148 In Year 2 the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall as pupils are introduced to several characters in history. In a sound lesson about Florence Nightingale, effective story telling reflected the interest and subject knowledge of the teacher and this held the interest of the pupils satisfactorily. Good links were made with literacy as the teacher made effective use of a well chosen book to illustrate the lesson material. In a very good lesson in personal and social

development very good links were made with history and pupils gained an excellent insight into genealogy and the ageing process as they heard the life story of an old lady born in Edwardian times. Through sensitive discussion of the poignant story pupils came to recognise some of the similarities and differences between their lives and that of the old lady in the story. The teacher's careful questioning and excellent use of the illustrations in the book led to very good gains in knowledge and spiritual awareness as pupils began to feel empathy for the elderly in the community.

149 It was not possible to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching of pupils in Years 3 to 6 because only two lessons were observed, both in Year 4. Both of these lessons involved pupils in drawing up a sequence of events to illustrate key dates in their topic on Invaders and Settlers. A weakness common to both lessons was the fact that the task had not been modified to meet the needs of different groups of pupils and it was too difficult for a significant number. In the better lesson the teacher had good subject knowledge and was able to explain the complicated concept clearly.

150 There is a lack of resources for some aspects of the curriculum, for example, historical artefacts, and this is limiting the quality of teaching.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

151 *Strengths:*

- *the quality of teaching is good. It is strongest in Years 5 and 6; and*
- *the subject is very well led and managed.*

Weaknesses

- *the lack of classroom computers adversely affects the quality of learning in Year 3 to Year 6.*

152 Standards are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2. Pupils are familiar with computer keyboards and use screen icons confidently. They understand how computers are used to handle and communicate information, including word processed text or CD-ROM. They have a secure understanding of basic word-processing and can change typefaces, sizes and colours. They know the difference between e-mails and text messages, and that the Internet can be searched for information. They recognise the purpose of calculators, videos, swipe cards and digital cameras as normal features of the modern world. They have used computer programs successfully in other subjects, 'painting' pictures for example in the style of the artist Mondrian, understand that considerable amounts of information can be stored electronically, and that a computer disc contains the equivalent of several books. It is a strength of the school that books and electronic storage of information are both equally valued in their own right.

153 Standards by the end of Year 6 are above national expectations. A Year 6 class, for example, made very effective use of their understanding of computer based spread sheets to apply their mathematical understanding to a series of problems relating to profit and loss in a sweet shop. They used their computers confidently with a secure understanding of basic software, mathematical symbols and formulae. Discussions with pupils, especially middle and higher attainers, indicate that they have a very secure understanding of the capability of the Internet. It took only a few minutes for three pupils to find out the day's news from Israel and the pound-New Zealand dollar exchange rate and that there was no previous Ofsted report on the school because it had been recently amalgamated. Other pupils demonstrated their understanding of software to produce slide show presentations and explained telephone banking, the use of bar coding in shops and how to book a holiday electronically. They know how to use simulations to test out real life situations and how sensors are used to measure speed, temperature and light.

154 Pupils' achieve well. Many pupils begin Year 1 with an average understanding about the use of technology and make sound progress in reaching expected levels by the age of seven. In the older classes the pupils make good progress and achieve higher than expected levels by the time they move to secondary education. This is because the overall quality of teaching is good. It is strongest in Years 5 and 6, where teachers are very confident with computers and the software. They make very good use of the high standards and concentration pupils bring to the lessons.

Lessons are well planned and detailed flow charts ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, follow initial logging on processes correctly and get quickly to the heart of the learning. In the best lessons, teachers are able to concentrate on teaching basic computer skills either through an inter-active board if working in the e-learning centre of the local education authority or by deploying an assistant to help any pupil who needs individual support. Pupil and classroom management is consistently good. Occasional use is made of information and communication technology in other subjects when time permits. Pupils in Year 3, for example, produced computer based tally sheets and block graphs when recording their favourite sandwich fillings.

155 The quality of learning is satisfactory in Year 1 and Year 2 and good for the older pupils in the direct acquisition of skills and knowledge. A weakness is the lack of sufficient opportunity to apply their learning across other subjects. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise what they have learned. There are no classroom computers and the use of information and communication technology in other subjects is limited to one hour every two weeks. The school recognises that this is very unsatisfactory and has firmly budgeted for the purchase of classroom computers in the current financial year. Learning is good in actual lessons when skills are taught, and when the suite is used to develop information and communication technology applications in other subjects. Year 3 pupils, for example, used a computer simulation effectively to discover the ideal growing conditions for plants as part of their work in science. Learning is also good, in Year 5 lessons using a computer simulation to show how machines can be controlled electronically, because the pupils are intellectually challenged, and make good progress through discussion with friends and through their own determination to be successful. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to the rest of the class because they are paired with more able pupils and learn quickly with their support.

156 The school has a well-equipped computer suite. Classes are timetabled for one hour a week, which limits the amount of progress pupils can make. Although the hardware is satisfactory and well used, there is no inter-active board and teachers have to move from workstation to workstation to teach the same point over and over again. There is a complete contrast when classes use the e-learning centre on the school site, and teachers have a very effective focal point for their teaching in the inter-active board. On these occasions the pace of learning rises considerably. The disadvantage of using the centre, however, is that there are not enough workstations for larger classes, and the quality of learning is adversely affected when too many pupils have to use the same computer and some are not actively involved.

157 The co-ordinator is very new to the responsibility but is already able to communicate a very clear vision of how the subject will develop and grow within the school. She has a well researched understanding of current standards, strengths and weaknesses, and the determination and capacity to raise standards even further.

MUSIC

158 *Strengths:*

- *the introduction of a structured course in Year 1 and Year 2;*
- *a commitment to providing pupils with instrumental tuition; and*
- *provision of opportunities for pupils to perform.*

Weaknesses:

- *allocated time is half the national average; and*
- *there are not enough opportunities for pupils to improvise and organise their own musical ideas.*

159 Overall, standards at the end of Year 2 just match expectations. By the end of Year 2 pupils are able to discriminate between such elements as pitch and tempo. They recognise that there are many different types of music. In one lesson they heard traditional Chinese music, and in assembly they listened to 'Morning' by Grieg. They understand that they have to be good listeners. They showed this when they listened carefully to explanations about woodwind and brass instruments. They enjoyed hearing the enthusiastic efforts of a non-musical teacher to produce notes on a

cornet. The tuneful, unison singing of 'Ten Green Bottles' was gleefully accompanied by appropriate actions. They are not yet proficient in exploring and organising sounds to produce the effect they want, however, and their retention of knowledge from previous units of work is insecure.

160 Standards are broadly average by Year 6 and the pupils achieve satisfactorily. In Year 3 to Year 6, there is a clear sense of expectation. Pupils talk animatedly about rhythm and texture. They often sing in class and know all the standard percussion instruments. They are able to talk about a range of music, including classical composers and songs from the twentieth century. They recognise the need for theoretical knowledge. Pupils know the range of voices from soprano to bass. Attention of middle and lower attainers can, however, waver when they are faced with composers such as Benjamin Britten.

161 Pupils in Year 6 have a keen appreciation of the principles of theme and variation. Their singing is well modulated, as they benefit from the training they have received when performing in the local musical festival. The main weakness in their learning is composition. Although they have completed some organisation of musical structures, they have not benefited from a commitment to explore and refine their own ideas.

162 The teaching and consequent learning is satisfactory overall, with significant strengths at the upper end of the school. Lessons in Year 1 and Year 2 are following a published scheme. This supports teachers whose own musical knowledge is insecure and helps pupils to make stepped gains in the knowledge they acquire and in their skills of performing. A Year 4 lesson to introduce voices of different registers was planned exhaustively. The teacher had organised information down to the last detail. This tight organisation inhibited improvisation, however, since the parameters were too narrow. A successful lesson in the infants resulted from team teaching. Both teachers played their roles effectively, complementing one another's skills. They made good use of four pupils who had just begun to learn the recorder. A very successful Year 6 lesson demonstrated the virtue of systematic skill development and planned links with other subjects. There was a strong literacy content in examining the words of "With a little help from my friends" and a telling reference to Childline, which had used it as a theme song. As a result the pupils made very good gains in understanding about theme and variation in a given piece. All teachers use a range of resources, but this does not extend to the use of information and communication technology.

163 The school appreciates that the choir and instrumentalists provide a high profile shop window for the school. Consequently, there is an understandable celebration of the school's success in the local musical festival and its contribution to local events. The millennium song composed by the pupils and sung successfully in the Civic Theatre is a cause for satisfaction. However, the numbers of pupils who benefit from instrumental tuition within the school is limited; for example, only seven pupils learn recorders in Year 1 and Year 2. The school choir is a pleasing mixture of boys and girls. The repertoire and range of singing are narrow. The school is well placed to develop musical activity, since three members of staff have significant musical talent.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

164 *Strengths:*

- *commitment to providing opportunities for extra-curricular and inter-school activities;*
- *a broad curriculum offering a full range of activities; and*
- *the curricular time allocated to the subject.*

Weaknesses:

- *organisation of lessons to cope with the full range of attainments; and*
- *pupils' ability to control movement is variable.*

165 By the end of Year 2, pupils participate satisfactorily in a range of gymnastic and dance activities and reach standards that are satisfactory overall. Pupils in Year 2 are able use space

appropriately and are aware of others. On the whole boys are much less skilled at analysing their work than the girls. The work of the girls is generally more controlled and poised. All pupils enjoy the challenge when given the opportunity to express themselves imaginatively. Higher attainers are able to create imaginative sequences of good quality using different heights and speed of movement.

166 It was not possible to observe Year 6 pupils in lessons. Although pupils' attainment in a poor lesson in Year 3 was below that typically expected, in all other lessons in Year 4 and Year 5, standards matched expectations. In Year 5, pupils developed effectively the skill of throwing and bowling. In this activity, pupils controlled the trajectory of a beanbag and their work was reasonably accurate. Pupils fully understand the need to warm up muscles prior to exercise – "our muscles are like plasticine and need to stretch."

167 Pupils generally bring suitable kit and the school has spare clothes for those who forget. However, in the poor lesson observed, one fifth of the class had no kit and as a result had to sit at the side of the field not participating in the lesson. Too much of the teaching time was spent organising groups and the level of physical involvement was much too low. In spite of this, to their credit, the pupils were very patient and behaved well. When given the opportunity pupils worked co-operatively and competitively. A mark of the sound teaching was the flexibility to adapt the lesson plan well to the cold conditions without losing the focus. As a result pupils improved their running style.

168 It is a strength of the school that stereotyped responses to the various activities are not evident. Both boys and girls are involved in all parts of the course. Girls thoroughly enjoy sports such as rugby, and many boys enjoy dance. All pupils particularly enjoy working on apparatus in the halls. All pupils in Year 4 to Year 6 follow a swimming programme and by the age of 11 almost all are able to swim at least 25 metres. Pupils are fully aware of the need for safe practice.

169 Pupils are involved in competition against other schools in activities such as soccer, netball and athletics. The school is justifiably proud of those who have achieved success at the "Town Sports" and display their photographs in the main corridor. Boys involved in the after school sessions taken by a coach from a local football club are most appreciative. The school also benefits from the support of a qualified parent in coaching soccer. There is some monitoring of teaching, but this lacks rigour. Termly reviews do not have a sharp focus on pupils' progress and attainment.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

170 *Strengths:*

- *pupils are given opportunities to reflect on the deeper implications of their lessons.*

Weaknesses:

- *many written tasks do not extend pupils' understanding.*

171 Standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for pupils aged seven and eleven. Pupils in Year 2 have an appropriate understanding of Hinduism. They know about the principal gods and respect those who choose to worship in different ways. Pupils in Year 6 have a sound recall of previous lessons on Hinduism and Sikhism, including work resulting from a visit to a Hindu temple. They have a sound understanding of the early founders of Judaism. They can recall events in the life of Jesus, including His teaching and healing miracles, know that Christians regard Him as the Son of God and that Easter is the most important Christian festival. They have had opportunities to reflect on and discuss the deeper spiritual and moral implications of their lessons. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress.

172 The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have a sound basic understanding of key facts and work hard to make their lessons interesting and informative. Pupils respond positively because the teachers are obviously interested in the subject material themselves. Lessons move along at a good pace because materials are well prepared and ready for use and behaviour is well managed. Several examples were seen where the teacher's own expressive style of reading and presentation caught the pupils' attention and made them concentrate harder. The better lessons contain planned opportunities for reflection on philosophical issues, as when Year 6 pupils realised that if they removed unpleasant features such as flies from a perfect world there would be a devastating effect on the food chain. The use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped.

173 The weakest aspect of the teaching is that many of the written tasks that follow the main taught section of the lesson lack stimulus and do not move the learning forward. Exercises that, for example, require pupils to copy text and fill in missing words are undemanding, especially for higher attaining pupils. The written task that followed a mature discussion in Year 6 about the Bible's account of the creation was an English comprehension exercise rather than an opportunity for pupils to reflect more deeply about the reasons for a creation story. It was unsatisfactory for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs because they found the level of challenge in the English task far too difficult.

174 The quality of learning is satisfactory. Pupils apply themselves diligently in lessons, ask questions and are keen to learn, but are not challenged enough in their written work or discussions. Year 5 pupils talked animatedly about photographs of different buildings and guessed their purpose. This led to a good understanding of how places of worship can be identified by external features such as a cross or minaret, but higher attaining pupils did not have enough opportunities to research in greater detail by checking their conclusions in reference books. The subject is effectively managed by a knowledgeable co-ordinator. She is aware of strengths and weaknesses within teaching through regular monitoring and evaluation of lessons and planning.