

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **ST.MARY'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND (AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Bury St.Edmunds, Suffolk

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124766

Headteacher: Mrs. W. Garrard

Reporting inspector: C.D. Loizou  
18645

Dates of inspection: 20 – 23 May 2002

Inspection number: 245281

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First school
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. P. Finnis
Date of previous inspection:	23 February 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1865	C.D. Loizou	Registered inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
13828	R. Ibbitson	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?
29703	R. Barton	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Mathematics Geography History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
29989	P. Goodsell	Team inspector	Foundation stage curriculum Science Art and design	
22788	S. West	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Music Physical education	

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The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division, The Office for Standards in Education

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is a Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School in the town of Mildenhall, Suffolk. The school is larger than most schools of this type with 297 pupils on roll between the ages of four and nine years. The school is popular and an increasing number of families choose to send their children to the school from outside the immediate area. A significant number of the pupils (approximately 15 per cent) in the school come from families belonging to American air force personnel who are stationed in the nearby airbase. There have been a significant number of staffing changes since the last inspection in 1998 and staff turnover is still high as many teachers move on to promotion. Six out of twelve staff were appointed since the last inspection and most of these to replace staff who have moved on or been promoted to work in other schools. This is one of the reasons for the school being given the national award “Investors in People” in recognition of the school’s commitment to the professional development of its staff. There is also a high turnover of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than the Reception year or Year 4. Last year for example, 52 out of 297 pupils joined or left the school other than the usual time of admission or transfer. The school receives specialist support from the local authority for providing for pupils who belong to Traveller families.

The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is less than four per cent, which is well below the national average. Seventeen per cent of the pupils are on the school’s special educational needs register, which is average. Three per cent of the pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need (SEN), which is low compared to most schools. There are no pupils in the school learning English as an additional language. The school admits up to 60 four-year-olds into its Reception year. Inspection judgements agree with the initial assessments of the children when they first start in the Reception year which show that their attainment is below that expected for children of this age.

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

The school provides a satisfactory education with many good features. The pupils achieve satisfactorily and the teaching is good overall. There have been improvements to the teaching because the headteacher and senior staff monitor this closely but there are some inconsistencies which account for the pupils not reaching the standards expected in mathematics and writing by the end of Year 2 in the national tests. The teaching and provision for children in the Reception year are very good. Standards are in line with those expected in English, mathematics and science by the time the pupils finish Year 4. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher, senior staff and governors. The teaching is particularly effective in improving the pupils’ personal development. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Standards in art and design, and music.
- The teaching and curriculum in the Foundation Stage (Reception) are strong features of the school.
- The pupils achieve well in Years 3 and 4, enabling them to reach the standards expected for their age in English, mathematics and science.
- The personal development of the pupils, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher, senior staff and governors. They have improved the school’s resources and accommodation ensuring that there is an excellent educational environment for all the pupils.
- The links with parents and the community are strong.



### What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Standards in writing in Year 2.
- Ensure that more of the teaching reaches the high standards seen in parts of the school so that the pupils make good progress in all subjects throughout the school.

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1998 and has made good progress since then. The headteacher, staff and governors have addressed the issues raised, particularly in improving how well the curriculum is planned. Standards have not improved in the national tests for seven year-olds and have remained below the national average since 1999. The school has begun to target pupils with a view to raising standards in mathematics and already does so in reading and writing. The headteacher and staff have managed to improve the design and technology curriculum and, as a result, standards have improved. There is more monitoring undertaken by the headteacher, senior staff, subject leaders and governors, and this is providing a clear sense of direction for the staff and pupils. This has improved and strengthened the teaching. This is reflected in improved reading and science standards. The teaching in Year 1 is good and in Year 2 satisfactory. This is beginning to have a positive impact on numeracy and writing standards.

### STANDARDS

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

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

<b>Key</b>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The children start school in the Reception year with a wide range of ability but their attainment on entry is below that expected for their age. They make good progress because the Foundation Stage curriculum is well planned and taught. By the end of the Reception year most of the children reach the expected levels for children of this age in all areas of learning. The table above shows that last year's national test results at age seven the standards were below average in reading and writing, and well below average in mathematics. Compared with similar schools, standards were well below average in reading, writing and last year's mathematics results were in the lowest five per cent of similar schools. Teachers' assessments in science show average standards. Inspection evidence shows that mathematics standards have improved and are now just below average. Currently, standards in reading and science are average and writing is below average. The pupils' handwriting and presentation of written work shows too many inconsistencies and many pupils spell common words incorrectly. In other subjects, the pupils achieve standards in line with those expected by the end of Year 2, except in art and design and music, where standards are above those expected.

By the end of Year 4, standards in English, mathematics and science are in line with those expected. Inspection findings match the school's own end of year assessments of the pupils last year and results confirm that the pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment on entry to Year 3. Standards in mathematics have improved considerably because the teaching of mental arithmetic and the structure of numeracy lessons are very challenging for the pupils. The pupils identified with moderate learning difficulties and those with special educational needs make good progress and most of them achieve the standards expected for their age. Standards in information and communication technology are in line with those expected by the age of seven and nine although better use of ICT could be planned into more science lessons. Art and design and music standards are above those expected because these subjects are very well taught. In other subjects, standards are in line with those expected by the time the pupils leave the school.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	The pupils' attitudes to learning, to school and to each other are good. They co-operate very well and support other pupils during lessons and at other times.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite and courteous and this is helping the pupils to learn in a calm and orderly learning environment. There have been no exclusions from the school.
Personal development and relationships	This is very good. The pupils show maturity, enjoy taking responsibility and show initiative. Older pupils support and work with younger ones.
Attendance	Attendance levels are satisfactory and in line with the national average. There is very little unauthorised absence.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils in:</b>	<b>Reception</b>	<b>Years 1 – 2</b>	<b>Years 3 – 4</b>
Quality of teaching	Very good	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.*

The teaching is good and ranges between satisfactory and very good. There has been a good improvement overall since the last inspection. The teaching is broadly satisfactory in Year 2 but more could be done to improve the standard of pupils' writing and their numeracy skills, particularly in providing greater challenge for the more able pupils. The teaching in the Reception year is very good because it sets high expectations and provides a good range of activities that very effectively support the development of reading and writing and other aspects of learning. The teaching in Year 1 is good because the teachers have high expectations. In Year 1, the teachers expect the pupils to present their written work neatly and correctly. In Year 2, expectations of the pupils' writing, and especially handwriting, are not as high. Standards in English, mathematics and science are in line with those expected by the end of Year 4 because the teaching enables the pupils to learn through practical and relevant experiences and tasks are well matched to the abilities of the pupils. The recent strategies adopted to improve reading have been successful. Reading is well taught throughout the school and

standards reach those expected. The pupils who have special educational needs are well taught and make good progress. Computers are used well to support the pupils' learning in many subjects but more use could be made of information and communication technology in science lessons. Art and design and music are well taught and these are given high priority in the school.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good. There is a good range of practical and relevant tasks and good opportunities for the pupils to use ICT. It is a rich and balanced curriculum that includes good quality art and design work and very good use of music as well as a good range of extra-curricular activities outside school hours. The school must now focus on continuing improvements to numeracy and writing by the end of Year 2.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The pupils receive good support. The pupils with learning difficulties are identified early and this helps to plan programmes of work for these pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision is made for the pupils' personal development. The pupils are also developing a very good understanding of life in a multi-cultural society. There is a very good range of educational visits which make a significant contribution to the pupils' social and cultural development. Music and singing make a significant contribution towards the pupils' spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There is a good level of care provided for all the pupils. There are satisfactory procedures to assess how well the pupils are doing in English, mathematics and science. More could now be done to extend these procedures to other subjects of the curriculum.

The school has very good links with parents. The parents are provided with regular information about the topics being covered in lessons and extra-curricular activities.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides good leadership. The assistant headteachers work closely with her to support the staff across the school. The management of the school is well focused on improving standards and supporting all the pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body provides good support. They work closely with the school and its staff and have a clear understanding of their role in managing and supporting the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is satisfactory. The governors and staff have established clear priorities in the school development plan through a process involving audits that identify strengths and weaknesses. More could be done to provide opportunities for the staff to monitor the pupils' workbooks closely to raise standards further.
The strategic use of resources	This is good. The school manages its finances very well, ensuring best value for money when committing resources or spending school funds. The large under spend last year is now committed to improving ICT resources further and necessary improvements to resources.

The school's accommodation is excellent and very well maintained. The support staff, such as classroom learning assistants and SEN support staff, make a valuable contribution to the pupils' learning. The administrative staff are very efficient and always make themselves available to parents and visitors as well as managing the smooth running of the school and its finances. Lunchtime supervision is very well managed. Everyone associated with the school contributes to its very good ethos and warm relationships.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school and are well behaved.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable approaching the school and are kept well informed.</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents.</li> <li>• The staff expect their children to work hard.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework provided by the school.</li> <li>• The range of activities provided outside lessons.</li> </ul>

Parents are pleased with the way the headteacher manages the school. They find that the staff are approachable and make them feel welcome. Inspectors support the positive views expressed by parents. Inspectors believe that extra-curricular activities are good. Homework is satisfactory and inspectors tend to agree with parents that more could be done to provide greater consistency in homework across the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Although there is a range of attainment when the children first join the Reception year, the attainment of the majority of children is below that expected for their age in language, literacy and personal and social development. The very good teaching in the Reception classes ensures that the children make good progress and, by the time they are five, the majority of the children reach the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, personal and social development, physical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They exceed the expected standards in creative development.
2. The standards achieved by the majority of seven-year-olds in the 2001 National Curriculum tests were below the national average in reading and writing and well below average in mathematics. Teacher assessments indicate that the pupils achieved average standards in science. Compared with similar schools, the pupils achieved well below average standards and in mathematics, the results were in the lowest five per cent of similar schools. The test results suggest that standards are below the national average and too few pupils achieve the higher Level 3 in the tests which has the effect of depressing overall test results. However, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 3 improved last year. Although last year's test results were below average, a contributory factor is the high turnover of pupils (nearly 20 per cent) leaving or joining the school at times other than the usual time of admission or transfer. Inspection findings also indicate that standards in mathematics have improved on previous years because of sharper monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and senior staff. Writing standards remain below those expected because more could be done to improve the pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation in Year 2.
3. Inspection findings confirm that, like last year's test results, standards in writing are still below those expected by the end of Year 2. Mathematics standards are improving and this is best reflected in the standards currently achieved by Year 1 pupils because of some very effective teaching in Year 1. In Year 2, although standards in mathematics are below those expected they are an improvement on previous years where test results show them to be very low. Reading standards by the end of Year 2 are in line with those expected, reflecting an improvement on previous years because the teaching of reading has been given high priority by the headteacher and staff. The evidence from the pupils' workbooks in Year 1, compared with that found in Year 2, shows that the teachers in Year 1 set higher and more consistent expectations for the pupils' handwriting and presentation. Consequently, the pupils have made better progress in writing than the pupils in Year 2. A higher than normal proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register in Year 2 is having some impact on standards but these pupils have made good progress in reading development enabling many of them to reach the standards expected for their age. The teachers in Year 2 could do better to improve writing standards given the acceptable standards achieved in reading and science and the improved standards in mathematics. Currently, science standards are in line with those expected. In mathematics, inspection findings indicate that the pupils are making good progress in Year 1 and satisfactory progress in Year 2, but standards by the end of Year 2 just fall short of the standards expected for their age. The pupils throughout Years 1 and 2 make good progress in reading because the school uses effective strategies during shared and group reading sessions in literacy lessons to improve the pupils' knowledge of letter sounds.

Similarly, science standards are higher, reaching those expected, because science is consistently well taught.

4. The standards in English, mathematics and science are in line with those expected by the end of Year 4. The pupils make good progress in Years 3 and 4 because teachers set high expectations and this is consistent in both year groups. Standards are rising because more focused and targeted work is provided for the pupils to ensure that a significant proportion of higher attaining pupils achieve higher levels for their age. This also ensures that lower and average attaining pupils achieve their potential. In both Year 3 and 4 the pupils make good progress, building well on the standards they achieved by the age of seven. Science standards are in line with those expected because the pupils have been challenged sufficiently in their science investigations.
5. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are in line with those expected nationally by the age of seven and nine. The pupils make good progress in ICT because opportunities are provided for the pupils to use new technology across a range of subjects. There has been good improvement since the last inspection because new resources have kept up with the demands of new technology, for example, better resources and the use of digital cameras, tape recorders and robotic devices, as well as very good use of the interactive white board in the “Sonic Room”. Indications are that standards will improve further and are likely to exceed those expected if the current trend of improvement is sustained.
6. Throughout the school the pupils make very good progress in music and good progress in art and design. In other subjects, they make satisfactory progress. Standards in art and design and music are above those expected by the age of seven and nine. In all other subjects, standards are in line with those expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Art and design and music are strong features of the school’s provision and these have established a good reputation in the school as a result. A significant proportion of pupils play musical instruments and there is a strong emphasis on learning about musical traditions including those from western and non-European cultures.
7. The pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are taught in mainstream classes and are also withdrawn for small group work in English and mathematics lessons. The pupils are well supported and make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 2 and good progress in Years 3 and 4. This is evident by the progress shown in their books from September to the present day. The pupils work hard and enjoy their group work. They try to make worthwhile contributions to discussions. The pupils who are identified as particularly gifted, for example, in English work or in music, are well supported and make good progress. SEN pupils who have special support, for example, those with physical disabilities, benefit greatly from the effective support and encouragement provided by their learning support assistants.

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

8. The pupils enjoy coming to school and have good attitudes to their learning. A Year 4 pupil said that ‘teachers make lessons fun’ and that when in lessons ‘I wonder what’s going to happen next’. With reference to the stimulating learning environment created by the staff another pupil in the same year said she liked the ‘cheerfulness of the equipment’. From the time they start each day pupils are well motivated and interested in classroom activities. They apply themselves well to the work set by their teachers and keep working until it is completed. They listen carefully to their teachers and are eager to join in class discussions. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good and the pupils work co-operatively with one

another when working in groups or pairs. Throughout the school the pupils are proud to share their work with visitors and are happy to explain what they are doing.

9. The children behave very well in the Reception classes, they know the routines of the classrooms, for example, putting their reading folders in the box and organising their snacks for playtime. The school has good arrangements in place for the Reception children to be introduced to school routines and this means that they come into school happily and confidently. The children enjoy learning, concentrate well and persevere to complete a task before they move to a new activity. They play and learn well, both alongside one another and together. They are encouraged to take care of their own and the school's belongings and to put away equipment and tidy up after themselves.
10. Throughout the school the pupils' behaviour is good. They know the school rules and stick to them. The pupils on the School Council have expressed a wish to have copies of the rules placed in the playground for all to see. The pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and are ready to start work when they enter their classrooms. In the playground they are enthusiastic and active. They enjoy meeting visitors and give a friendly greeting in passing. In discussions with visitors they express themselves with confidence and are keen to talk about their school experiences. They are extremely loyal to the school and its staff. During the inspection there were no signs of aggressive or inappropriate behaviour in either the school building or the grounds. Bullying incidents, on the rare occasions they emerge, are dealt with effectively. There were no exclusions last year.
11. The personal development of the pupils is very good. They respect school rules and adhere to established class routines. They listen to one another in discussion, take turns and respect the ideas of other pupils. They show a developing appreciation of the values of others and have a keen sense of fairness. In a discussion with some Year 4 pupils for example, they were quick to see the injustice of treating people differently just because of differences in skin colour. The pupils of all ages cheerfully accept a wide range of responsibilities, according to age and ability. In the early years for example, all the children in the Reception year are encouraged to help when tidying away after activities and as they progress through the school more responsibilities are given to them. Pupils in Year 4 for example, set up the overhead projector for assemblies and collect and deliver internal post. The School Council, which includes two children elected from each class, is a valuable means of introducing pupils to the democratic process. The Council meets at least once each half term to discuss various issues affecting the school from the children's point of view. A Council discussion on cleanliness in the school resulted in the 'Silver Dustpan and Brush Award', which is given to anyone making a contribution to keeping the school clean. All Council discussions are recorded and are available on the school's website. Current issues being discussed are the need for more outdoor play equipment. Year 4 pupils participate in a 'friendship stop' in the playground designed to help younger pupils find a friend. It was noted that children are particularly considerate to those pupils with physical disabilities. Through the enthusiastic acceptance of their responsibilities pupils increase their confidence and also set standards for other pupils.
12. Most pupils attend school regularly and punctually and the overall attendance rate is broadly in line with the national average. Apart from unavoidable sickness the main reason for absences is the growing number of pupils being taken out of school in term time to go on family holidays. The school is aware of the problem and has taken action to bring to all parents the need for regular attendance. Registrations are carried out promptly at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions and lessons begin on time.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. The teaching is good overall with a significant proportion that is very good. Appointments to the teaching staff and good monitoring and support provided by the headteacher and senior staff have improved and strengthened the teaching further. In all of the lessons seen, the teaching was at least satisfactory and the large majority was found to be good or better. Although the teaching seen during the inspection in Years 1 and 2 was satisfactory overall, there are some aspects of the pupils' previous work in Year 2 which shows inconsistencies in the expectations set by teachers for the standard of the pupils' writing and recorded work in a range of subjects. The teaching of writing in Year 2 specifically is not as effective as in other year groups and this is currently not helping to raise standards in writing by the end of Year 2. In mathematics, recent changes to the teaching staff and a focus on those pupils who have the potential to achieve higher standards for their age have had a direct bearing on improvements in standards, especially in Year 1, where the most significant improvements are evident. The teaching in the Reception year is strong. Nearly three-quarters of the lessons seen in the Reception classes were found to be very good. In Years 3 and 4, the teaching is good with nearly all the lessons seen being good or better and one in three lessons very good.
14. The teaching is very good in the Reception classes. Ten lessons were seen in the Foundation stage, all of which were at least good lessons and seven were very good. The quality of the teaching enables the children to make a good start to school, they make very good progress and achieve well. The teaching in both of the classes has a number of strengths, including the very effective use of questions and talk to promote and challenge the pupils' thinking and communication skills. The classes are well organised and the children are very well managed. The teachers plan activities carefully to ensure that there are opportunities for the children to have access to all six areas of learning as set out in the Foundation stage curriculum as well as the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies. The children make good progress in the basic skills of reading and writing and in number work because they are well taught in both classes. In both classes very good use is made of the teaching assistants who effectively support individual and group activities. The teachers work hard to provide a productive and stimulating range of activities and this enables the children to make very good progress overall.
15. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall and is mainly good in Year 1. Seventy-four per cent of the lessons seen were good and eleven per cent, all in Year 1, were very good. The rest of the teaching seen was satisfactory but the evidence in the pupils' workbooks in Year 2 shows that there are inconsistencies in the expectations set for the pupils in writing and in some of their numeracy work. The teaching in Year 1 is good with a significant amount that was found to be of high quality. The teachers in both years plan work carefully and higher attaining pupils in Year 2 have done better in mathematics so that standards have improved on previous years but remain below average. The pupils respond well to the teaching. They listen carefully to instructions and during class discussions they offer thoughtful answers and responses. The teaching is having a positive impact on the pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour. There are clear rules and classroom routines which provide a secure learning environment for the pupils. The introduction to lessons make it clear what is expected and the learning objectives are always shared with the pupils, for example, in a Year 1 English lesson the pupils made good progress building on their knowledge of letter sounds to spell words correctly as they wrote them down on individual white boards. In Year 2, the pupils have made satisfactory progress with their writing but they are not



always expected to present their writing neatly and accurately. Lower attaining pupils in one English lesson observed were set the same task as other pupils and this limited the progress they made. The pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation varies considerably in Year 2, reflecting some inconsistencies in the way the pupils have been taught.

16. In Years 3 and 4, the teaching is good overall and ranges from satisfactory to very good. Eighty-five per cent of the lessons observed were good or better, including more than one in three lessons that were very good. The teachers prepare challenging and interesting tasks that motivate and sustain the pupils' concentration, enabling them to work hard and persevere with tasks. In all of the lessons seen, there was a good structure so that time was provided for the pupils to ask questions and explain their methods, as for example, in a very good English lesson where the pupils experimented with words using humorous poetry. The pupils made good use of alliteration and onomatopoeia to improve their writing and produce some lively and imaginative sentences in the style of a humorous poem. In a good mathematics lesson, Year 4 pupils were being challenged to think of halves and doubles using numbers up to 50 and then 100. The pupils used different methods for calculating multiplication facts showing a good understanding of counting in fives and tens. The grouping of pupils by prior attainment is particularly effective in Year 3 because it allows the teachers to plan work that is closely matched to the capabilities of the pupils in each group. Very good use is made of ICT. For example, in an English lesson, the pupils' knowledge of word processing improved very well as they organised and re-arrange text on computers and edited their work using the spell check function. The teacher allowed time for the pupils to explore the text and to write their own passages using adjectives and adverbs to add colour and description to their work.
17. The teachers throughout the school use satisfactory assessment procedures to monitor the pupils' progress in all subjects. Work is usually marked up to date but there are some inconsistencies in some classes where the marking sets different expectations so it is not always clear to the pupils how they are to improve their work. Teachers keep good records having tested what the pupils know but this information is not consistently used to plan future work for the pupils. There is however some good use of regular assessments, including optional national tests in Years 3 and 4, which help to inform and adapt teachers' planning because it is clear what has been learnt and what needs to come next.
18. Teachers prepare activities that are well matched to the needs of SEN pupils. The individual education plans have targets that take account of the specific learning needs of each pupil. Appropriate technical and support equipment has been obtained for pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need.

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

19. At the time of the last inspection all of the 'Key issues for action' made reference to the development of aspects of curriculum provision. All of these issues have been satisfactorily addressed. There is now a consistent standard of planning across the school and the school has implemented schemes of work for all subjects. Subject co-ordinators are identifying targets for the development of their subjects and are developing their monitoring of the quality of the teachers' planning and work. The one subject that was judged to be unsatisfactory at the previous inspection was design and technology. The provision and the pupils' attainment in this subject are now satisfactory. The school curriculum meets all statutory requirements.
20. Throughout the school the quality and range of learning opportunities are good. The

curriculum is broad and balanced and incorporates personal, health and social education and sex education, which is provided within guidelines agreed by the governing body. All the pupils have full access to the curriculum. The Christian values and philosophy of the school are reflected very well in its commitment to provide the best possible equality of opportunity for all its pupils whatever their age, ability, special educational needs or background.

21. In the Reception classes, which form the Foundation Stage, the children have access to a broad curriculum that is well planned. It takes into account the early learning goals and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Good opportunities for the children to explore, use their imagination and experience play situations to extend their speaking and listening skills are regularly provided.
22. The school has rightly given a high priority to the teaching of literacy and numeracy and this is being targeted so that the pupils improve their numeracy and writing skills by the end of Year 2. This has resulted in improvements in standards in numeracy by the end of Year 2 but standards remain below average. Reading standards have improved most across the school because the topics covered provide many opportunities for the pupils to read widely. The school is developing the use of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, but at the moment this has had a variable impact across the school. The provision and use of information and communication technology across the school is also variable, but has already been identified by the school as an area for further development
23. Schemes of work are in place for all subjects and the school now has a clear framework that enables teachers to plan systematically. The teachers plan together well in year groups and discuss the work they are doing. However, there is a need to improve their planning for the range of ability within each year group by the end of Year 2 particularly. For example, less consolidation work and further extension work could be used to meet the needs of the higher attaining pupils and so further raise standards in mathematics and writing by Year 2.
24. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities during lunch times and after school. These include activities such as computer club, recorder playing, chess, French, football, athletics and hockey. The contribution of the community to the pupils learning is very good. Visitors to the school support and enrich the pupils' work in many areas, such as geography, literacy, history, physical education, art, religious education, health and music. These visitors range from parents who come in to talk about and show artefacts connected with Indian studies and Judaism, to artists, theatre groups, orchestras, health workers and the local vicar. The local area is extensively used for studying local services, the environment, street planning, traffic censuses, buildings and businesses. The number and range of visits that the pupils make is very good and adds considerably to the curriculum provision that the school offers its pupils. Visits, for instance, to different museums, botanic gardens, a recreated Ghanaian village and a sea life centre. The school maintains good links with cluster schools and the local middle school. The Year 4 pupils are invited to the feeder middle school drama production, and to take part in a music workshop and a cluster sports event. They visit the school and are visited by some of the middle school teachers at their own school.
25. The curriculum is also enhanced by 'special events', such as: a Greek day for Year 3 pupils; a wash day for early years children; a creative arts week for the whole school; and an 'Ugly Bug Ball' for reception pupils. The school provides very well for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This provision contributes to the very good personal development of the pupils and is a strength of the school.

26. The school's mission statement says 'Saint Mary's School is a Christian school where we aim to inspire, value, learn and celebrate together'. This is very well carried out through many lessons and other activities. The adults in the school are very good at developing an ethos within which all the pupils can grow and flourish, respect others and are respected. Assemblies, circle time and quiet times during the day take place in a calm, purposeful and reflective atmosphere. Assemblies in particular are made meaningful because they are carefully planned to include opportunities for the pupils to reflect on the spiritual and moral dimensions to daily life. In art and design, music and dance lessons the pupils have opportunities to express their feelings and to consider how they themselves are special. The pupils learn about spirituality and morality as expressed in other world faiths such as Judaism and Hinduism. They develop respect for the environment and learn to look for beauty and delight in natural and manmade things. During the inspection the Year 2 pupils explored different parts of the school grounds and were excited and delighted at the wide range of mini-beasts that they discovered. Year 4 pupils were amazed when investigating the contents of owl pellets as part of their science topic on habitats and food chains.
27. All the pupils discuss and set their own class rules at the beginning of the school year. The school has clear behaviour policies and strategies in place. The school promotes equality of opportunity for all its members, both the pupils and adults. It develops an open and safe environment and gives the pupils opportunities to develop their ideas on making moral stands against bad behaviour and to understand the difference between right and wrong. Good behaviour and thoughtfulness for the needs of others are strong features of the values that the school promotes.
28. The school provides very well for the pupils' social development. The pupils are given many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. The School Council, for example, allows pupils to contribute to the way in which the school functions. Each class elects two pupils to represent them on the Council. They meet with an assistant headteacher to present the views of all the pupils and to make suggestions about how the school could be improved. Recently the Council suggested introducing a new quiet area in the school grounds so those children who want to be in a calmer environment than the main playground areas have somewhere to go. The school encourages the pupils to help others in different circumstances to their own by supporting a wide range of local and international charities. A very valuable and special learning experience has been the highly successful efforts, together with local churches, to fund the building of a school in Malawi and the continuing support given by the school.
29. The very good range of enriching opportunities provided by the school across the whole curriculum fosters the cultural awareness of the pupils. Very good use is made of visiting musicians and artists to work with the pupils and to explore their own culture and that of others. There are educational visits to places such as museums, theatres and exhibitions. The school encourages and values the partnership with parents from a wide variety of backgrounds. For example, American festivals of Thanksgiving and Independence Day are enjoyed and supported with enthusiasm and a Japanese parent has shared her culture with pupils showing them traditional Japanese food and origami skills. The school is celebrating its Centenary this year with a rich programme of artistic and 'living memory' activities. The school includes a very good range of cultures and faiths in its curriculum. The very good presentation of the attitudes, values, art and traditions of a diversity of cultures is encouraging the pupils to recognise, understand and value their own cultures and to learn tolerance and openness to new ideas from other traditions and cultures.

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

30. The school makes very good provision for the welfare of its pupils and has continued to develop the good care and welfare procedures mentioned in the last inspection report. The pupils feel secure in the caring environment provided by the school. In the Reception classes the children come into school happily and confidently. The start to the day is calm, positive and productive. There are good arrangements in place for the day-to-day exchange of information between parents, carers and the school staff and for the children to leave school safely in the care of a known adult.
31. The arrangements for child protection are very good and records are securely maintained. The headteacher is the named person for dealing with child protection matters and has received appropriate training. The headteacher ensures that all the staff are aware of the procedures to be followed in the event of a child being considered at risk.
32. There are very good procedures for promoting good behaviour. The school's strong Christian ethos provides a framework for all school activities, which enables children to appreciate and care for others. The school's positive behaviour policy encourages and rewards good behaviour and the very good relationships that exist between staff and pupils further promote this. The teachers have a good understanding of the pupils they care for and this enables them to offer individual support and guidance.
33. Through the high standards of its spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision the school encourages the personal development of its pupils very well. Very good provision is made to encourage the development of pupils' personal and social skills, for example, through class discussions and the School Council. Responsibilities are given to all the pupils and these are well matched to their age and maturity. The pupils are encouraged to consider people less fortunate than themselves and this is demonstrated by the school's interest in a project in Malawi.
34. Soon after entry into the Reception classes a baseline assessment is carried out with the children and the information is used to target areas for development with individual children. The children with special educational needs are identified at an early stage and good support is given to them. This enables them to participate in the activities planned for Reception children and for them to make good progress. The teachers of Reception children have good arrangements in place to check how well all the children are learning on a daily basis and whether they are making enough progress. They use the information very well to plan further work for the children. The procedures for assessment are satisfactory overall, but there are inconsistencies in the way assessment is used in Year 2 to inform the planning of writing and mathematics. Records of the pupils' academic progress and informal notes on their personal progress are kept. Learning support assistants frequently observe and make notes on individual pupils particularly those who have special educational needs. These are discussed with teachers and recorded. Targets are set from year to year and teachers have expectations of what pupils will achieve at the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 2 statutory assessment tests are analysed for dips and trends and targets are set for Years 3 and 4. As a result, the curriculum is carefully planned and a system of grouping the pupils by ability has been introduced in Year 3. Consequently, from Year 3 and through Year 4 the teachers use their ongoing assessments of the pupils' progress more systematically to inform their planning. As a result, by the end of Year 4 the pupils make good progress.
35. There are good arrangements for the monitoring and promotion of attendance. The importance of regular attendance is regularly emphasised to parents and certificates are

awarded to pupils who obtain 100 per cent attendance. At present the school is carefully monitoring those pupils who are absent from school because of family holidays taken in term time and parents requesting such leave of absence are reminded of the possible consequences.

36. All the pupils in the school are well looked after and those children with physical disabilities are particularly well cared for. Some adaptations to the building have been made to suit the physically disabled, for example, the installation of a separate, suitably designed toilet. There is a first aid room where pupils sustaining minor injuries can be treated by qualified first-aiders and even the slightest accidents are carefully recorded in an accident book. There are good procedures for dealing with health and safety matters. Fire alarms are checked daily and emergency drills are held once a term. All fire fighting equipment is serviced annually. Although risk assessments are carried out and recorded the procedures for filing these records are not being implemented consistently. Records of the most recent risk assessment, for example, were unavailable for inspection.

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

37. The school has maintained the very good partnership with parents mentioned at the time of the last inspection and this continues to be a strength of the school. The partnership with its parents enriches the life of the school and has a direct bearing in supporting the pupils' learning.
38. Parents have very good views of the school, are very supportive and take an interest in their children's learning. They feel the school expects children to work hard to achieve their best and are pleased with their progress. Several parents come into school to help in the classroom or accompany children on school visits. Others who cannot come into school help their children with their schoolwork at home, such as preparing materials for topics being covered in lessons. The school maintains a register of parent volunteers and issues good guidelines for volunteers. There are presently twenty parents on the register who help on a regular basis.
39. The school has very good arrangements in place for the introduction of the Reception children to school. These include visits to the playgroups and nurseries attended by the children as well as the children visiting the Reception classes before starting school and special meetings for parents are arranged by the headteacher and Foundation Stage staff. The teachers build on the work done at the local Nursery School and playgroups from which the children transfer. The teachers are readily available to the parents and carers to discuss any problems and regular evenings are arranged to cover the overall progress made by the children.
40. Coffee mornings are held regularly for parents and these events are much appreciated by them because they can meet and talk with other parents about their children and the school. The parents are encouraged to bring their younger pre-school children to these events. Each term special lunches are also arranged when parents can join their children in school. The coffee mornings are arranged by the 'Parents in Partnership', which is an active association of parents that arranges fund raising events to aid the school. Events are arranged throughout the year with the most popular being the summer fair, this is attended by parents, grandparents, staff and pupils and is a successful social, as well as fund raising event. The school has benefited through substantial donations following such events.
41. The quality of information provided to parents is very good. There are frequent newsletters from the headteacher and also from class teachers. These are lively and informative and keep parents well advised of what is happening in the school. The school brochure and annual

records of pupils' academic progress all meet statutory requirements. The parents are pleased with the pupil reports that advise them of their children's academic and personal development. Open evenings are held once a term for parents to meet class teachers and at the summer meeting to discuss pupil reports. In the pre-inspection questionnaire the great majority of parents said they felt comfortable about coming into school. During the inspection the parents spoken to say the headteacher and teachers are very approachable. They can see teachers briefly at the beginning or end of each day or where discussions are necessary, make appointments. Contact books are used primarily for recording reading books but are also a useful means of communication between the parents and class teachers.

42. The school has an excellent computer website which it uses as a further means of communicating with parents. Much useful information about the school is contained on the website and the information is updated regularly and managed by the school's administrative officer. The parents are offered the opportunity to read current and past newsletters and also the governors' annual report to parents. Comments or queries from parents can be e-mailed back to the school. Each week's school dinner menu is also available on the website. The school ascertained by means of questionnaires how many parents would be able to use the website before setting it up.

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

43. The headteacher provides good leadership. She works closely with the two assistant headteachers and together they are an effective team. They focus and steer the work of the staff and governors to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning through monitoring lessons and scrutinising pupils' work and teachers' planning. Raising standards further in mathematics by the end of Year 2 has been the main focus for development recently and this has resulted in improvements this year where standards, although below average in mathematics, are higher than in previous years. For this reason, the pupils in Year 3 have been grouped by ability and one of the senior teachers has been deployed in Year 1 to build on the very good work being done in the Reception year. In this way the headteacher and senior team have adapted the deployment of staff to provide greater consistency in the teaching and to maximise the effectiveness of very good practice across the school. There are already clear signs that this is working with the current Year 1 group of pupils achieving standards expected for their age. The headteacher makes herself available to parents and staff and ensures that she spends time in each part of the school to maintain contact with the pupils. Parents agree that her management and that of other senior staff is good.
44. A major improvement since the last inspection is the school's determination to raise standards in Year 2. As a result, the teaching has improved standards in reading, mathematics and science in Year 2. The school improvement plan has targets for improvement and monitoring is satisfactory. However, more could now be done to improve writing standards in Year 2. The senior staff and subject co-ordinators do not always have sufficient time to monitor the pupils' writing books.
45. The governors are knowledgeable and experienced and very committed to the needs of the school and its pupils. They provide good support and manage the school well. They work closely with the headteacher. There are some monitoring procedures in place and governors are kept well informed by the headteacher and senior staff. Named governors meet appropriate staff, for example, the special educational needs co-ordinator and the SEN governor and link governors attached to literacy and numeracy. This gives them an insight into the work being done and the progress that the pupils are making. They are experienced and

know the pupils and staff very well. There are well established and effective routines in place which fully comply with statutory requirements so that all governors fully understand their responsibilities. There are good arrangements in place to train new governors and to involve them in committees. It is clear from the headteacher's reports and governors' minutes of meetings, including committee meetings, that the school is well managed.

46. Subject co-ordinators and the assistant headteachers draw up action plans and have good plans in place to support staff in their respective subjects and areas of responsibility. This has helped to improve reading standards as well as ensuring progression in other subjects. Resources are well managed and the co-ordinators scrutinise teachers' planning to ensure that there is appropriate work being done. Co-ordinators who have recently been appointed are well supported by the headteacher and senior staff, who help them prepare an effective curriculum and professional development programme for the staff. The deployment of learning support staff has been successful in helping them to provide skilled intervention programmes that involve teaching reading, writing and numeracy as well as inclusive support in other subjects for groups of pupils and individuals. This has had a positive effect on the pupils identified with special educational needs.
47. The school is adequately staffed with a team of dedicated teachers. Teachers are all suitably qualified and trained in the appropriate phase. All the staff have been trained to teach the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and there has been effective training for staff in the use of ICT. Administrative staff are very effective and efficient and play a significant part in the friendly and welcoming atmosphere at the school.
48. The school's finances are well managed and this is reflected in the excellent accommodation and improvements to resources since the last inspection. The school environment is very purposeful and lively with excellent outdoor facilities that are used to support the pupils' personal, physical and academic development. The headteacher and governors make good use of the funds available to the school but last year the school accumulated a large carry forward under spend which has now been allocated to further improvements to resources and staffing, including substantial commitments to more information and communication technology resources. There are efficient and effective procedures in place to track spending and determine priorities for resources in the school's management plan.
49. Accommodation is excellent. There is a good information and communication technology room together with an additional "Sonic Room" which houses the interactive white board. The very generous grounds, which the school has developed into a range of environmental areas, are very well used. The whole site is very well set out, with gardens, trees and attractive play houses, shelters and climbing apparatus.
50. The teacher with responsibility for managing the Foundation Stage provides a clear direction and vision for the provision and development of the curriculum for Reception children. She has some opportunities to check what happens in both Reception classes and to decide what needs improving. The classrooms, practical area and outdoor play facilities provide a good variety of activities to support learning in all areas. The furnishing, decoration and displays are lively and colourful. The school has sufficient, suitably qualified staff to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum and to meet the needs of all pupils. The teachers have a good balance of expertise and experience. The number of support staff is good. They are well qualified and work well with the teachers to provide good support for the pupils. Arrangements for the professional development of staff, including support staff, are good and this is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and support provided across the

school. There is an effective strategy for appraisal and performance management and the induction of newly qualified teachers is also of a good standard.

51. The management of special educational need is good. The register is kept properly and identifies pupils' targets and when reviews take place. All the staff is involved with drawing up individual educational programmes for those in their class who need them. This is done in consultation with the co-ordinator and learning support assistants are made aware of the pupils' targets. The pupils' progress is assessed termly by outside specialists, however the school does not have a centrally based record of standards and the progress made by the pupils.



## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

52. In order to improve the quality of education further, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

**\* Raise standards in mathematics by the end of Year 2 by:**

- targeting the pupils who have the potential to exceed the standards expected for their age, ensuring that they reach their full potential;
- ensuring that the work provided for the pupils of all abilities is sufficiently challenging;
- improving the way that the pupils' work is monitored.

(Paragraphs: 2-3; 6; 13; 15; 22; 43-44; 75-77)

**\* Raise attainment in writing in Year 2 by:**

- improving the pupils' handwriting and presentation of all recorded work;
- teaching the pupils how to use appropriate punctuation in their writing;
- setting the same high expectations seen in the rest of the school;
- monitoring the teachers' marking to ensure that this is more effective in improving the pupils' writing.

(Paragraphs: 2-3; 6; 15; 23; 44; 66; 69; 72)

**\* Ensure that more of the teaching reaches the high standards seen in parts of the school so that the pupils make good progress throughout the school.**

(Paragraphs: 13-18; 55; 70; 73; 80; 87)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	49
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	21

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

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	16	29	4	0	0	0
Percentage	0	33	59	8	0	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	297
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	49

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

### *Attendance*

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	33	25	58

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	31	28	29
	Girls	20	19	18
	Total	51	47	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (80)	81 (87)	81 (88)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	32	31
	Girls	19	19	23
	Total	49	51	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (80)	88 (92)	93 (97)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	220
Any other minority ethnic group	16

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

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	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.*

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.6
Average class size	29.7

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	202

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	607,559
Total expenditure	596,150
Expenditure per pupil	2,007
Balance brought forward from previous year	65,000
Balance carried forward to next year	76,409

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	297
Number of questionnaires returned	171

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	66	30	2	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	44	3	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	56	2	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	53	18	2	1
The teaching is good.	55	41	3	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	39	16	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	36	2	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	40	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	42	50	7	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	55	42	2	1	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	51	2	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	36	17	5	11

### **Other issues raised by parents**

The parents say that they choose the school because it provides a positive and supportive environment for their children. Many believe that the staff work hard to provide a wide range of interesting activities and opportunities for all the pupils. Some parents are concerned by the lack of consistency in the teaching when the school uses supply teachers.

## **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**

53. There are currently sixty Reception children in two classes. The children all enter the school in September on a full time or mornings only basis. They attend full time from the beginning of the term in which they are five.

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

54. The children enter the school with a wide range of personal, social and emotional development but overall it is below the standard expected for their age. The children make very good progress in the Reception classes and most achieve what is expected by the age of five. The children settle quickly and happily when they come into school. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is very good, the teachers make sure that all the children have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and as a result they develop positive attitudes to learning. They know the routines on entering the classroom and immediately become involved with the good range of activities provided such as writing, reading, building with construction sets and using the role-play areas.
55. The teachers have high expectations of the children's behaviour and ability to take care of themselves. The children are confident and independent when dressing and undressing and when taking care of their personal hygiene. There is a good balance of teacher-directed tasks and of children-chosen activities in the classes. This provides good opportunities for the children to develop independence and self-reliance, especially when they move between the activities during the free-choice sessions. The children's personal and social skills are developed well because they are provided with good opportunities to work and play together and to reflect on the effect of their actions on others. They persevere with tasks and behave very well. There are very good relationships between all the adults who work in the Reception classes and the children. The children are gaining confidence in speaking to adults and each other. They respond well to questions from their teachers and other adults and try hard to think things through for themselves. There has been good progress in this area of learning since the last inspection.

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

56. Although there is a wide range of attainment the majority of children enter the Reception classes with below average language skills. There is a small number whose development, in speaking and listening skills, and in reading and writing is well below the standards expected for their age. Overall, the teaching in this area is very good. The children make good progress and by the end of the Reception year, the proportion of the children who achieve the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy is in line with the standards expected of children this age.
57. The children enjoy listening to and reading stories and information books and they concentrate well in literacy sessions. They listen to and talk to their teachers and other adults in individual and group discussions. They respond well to events in stories such as 'The Train Ride'. The teachers extend the children's vocabulary by skilful questioning and they learn to explain words

such as journey and steam train and use phrases such as 'a shiny red tractor'. The teachers give the children good opportunities to talk about how the characters in the story feel about events and how they can relate this to their own lives. For example, the children make a range of imaginative suggestions about who is waiting for the child at the end of the train journey.

58. The teachers develop and then build on the children's early reading skills through the sharing of books and stories and the very good teaching of phonic skills. The majority of the children know the individual letters of the alphabet by name and sound. They recognise, read, and by the end of the year, can write their names. They recognise a range of words by sight and use their knowledge of letter sounds to help them read and write unfamiliar words. The most able children read fluently and are able to retell stories they have read. All the children take reading books home daily to share with parents and carers and this makes a positive contribution to their achievement.
59. Whilst in the Reception classes the children acquire a good understanding of the writing process, they hold pencils correctly and are taught the correct way to form letters. The classrooms have alphabet charts and labels to encourage the children to link letters and sounds and write words themselves. There are good opportunities for the children to encourage them to write for a wide variety of purposes. The teachers value the efforts that the children make and as a consequence they approach writing tasks with confidence and enjoyment. Writing is often lively and a good range of vocabulary is used, for example, one child wrote, 'horses like to munch food and they like to waggle their tails'. However, on some occasions in writing sessions the children are not given consistent support by, for example, individual alphabet and sound cards to help them independently build words. This results in a slowing of progress in their writing skills. There has been good progress since the last inspection in the teaching of communication and language skills.

## **Mathematical development**

60. The children enter the school with skills in mathematical development that are lower than expected for their age. The teaching is consistently good and frequently very good, and enables the children to make good progress in gaining mathematical understanding and skills. By the end of the Reception year, the proportion of the children who have achieved the early learning goals is in line with that expected of children this age. The children make good progress because the teachers know what they have learnt and plan the next stage of work carefully to challenge and extend their knowledge of, and skills of working with numbers. As the school year progresses the children have increased access to the framework of the National Numeracy Strategy. The teachers make learning fun through games and singing rhymes and the children build confidence in counting and using their number skills. On a few occasions, the mental and oral part of the lessons is too short and lacks challenge especially for the more able children.
61. The teachers frequently provide good opportunities for the children to count and use numbers, and this enables them to develop their understanding of the number system. The children recognise the numbers one to ten in digits and most of the children can count to at least 30 and many confidently beyond. Some children can count to and from a hundred in tens. They understand the concept of simple addition, and are beginning to add and subtract to ten. The more able can work with larger numbers. The children learn to use money and about the symmetry of pattern by looking at prints from nature. They are given a very good introduction



to finding the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes. There has been good progress in this area of learning since the last inspection.

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

62. By the time they are five, most children are likely to achieve the level expected in knowledge and understanding of the world. The quality of teaching is very good in this area and the children make good progress. There are some minor shortcomings in the use of resources needed to provide a full foundation stage curriculum. For example, the well-equipped outdoor area is not always used to full advantage. Good opportunities for the children to explore, use their imagination and experience play situations to extend their speaking and listening skills are provided but are limited by the lack of planned learning opportunities and interventions by adults.
63. The children are given good opportunities to use the computers together with other information and communication (ICT) technology equipment such as the programmable robots. They know how to use a program to choose colours and lines to make pictures and they confidently use the mouse to point and click. As part of the 'Journeys' topic the children made very good use of the interactive board in the 'Sonic Room' to match modes of transport to their use on land, sea, in the air and underground. The children carried out a traffic survey from the safety of the playground making good links to mathematics, ICT and geography. They completed a chart for 'Walk to School Week' and this complemented their previous work on map making. The children understand the concept of representing a route on paper and produced good quality maps including symbols for road signs and other features. Very good use is made of visits and visitors to support the curriculum, for example, the children visited a local travel agents to find out how holidays are chosen and booked. There are good opportunities for the children to explore and investigate scientific areas. When the children are learning about properties of materials they can sort them into categories such as shiny, soft, cold, hard and magnetic and non-magnetic. They learn to recognise the stages of change and growth in themselves and other young animals. There are good opportunities for the children to learn about the faith and customs of Christianity and the stories of the Old Testament such as Noah's Ark. By participating in whole school activities the children learn about other religions, cultures and traditions. There has been good progress in this area of learning since the last inspection.

### **Physical development**

64. The children develop their physical skills well during indoor and outdoor activity sessions. By the age of five, most children reach the standards expected for their age in this area of learning. The teaching in this area is very good and this enables the children to make very good progress. The children show a good awareness of space by not bumping into each other as they move and they take care when they are playing not to act in ways that may harm other children. They have very good opportunities to develop their skills on wheeled outdoor equipment and to climb and balance on large apparatus. They can dress and undress themselves. There are good opportunities to develop fine motor skills using paintbrushes, pencils and scissors, as well as through joining together pieces when completing jigsaws, train tracks and models. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

## **Creative development**

65. The children enjoy a very good range of experiences in art, music, story and imaginative play. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and the children make very good progress in their creative development. Most attain and exceed the early learning goals before they start Year 1. The children know a good range of colours and they paint with enjoyment, confidence and skill. They paint lively and colourful self-portraits, a range of patterns and their drawings depict trains, vehicles and landscapes very well. They know how to mix colours and how to add white to create a paler shade. They draw careful and intricate pictures of bicycles. The children can discuss the finished products and explain how they achieved different effects. Materials such as sand and water are available for them to explore on a daily basis. Well planned music lessons and a range of musical instruments, songs and rhymes, help to develop the children's understanding of sound, rhythm and pattern. They all sing and join in songs with actions competently and enthusiastically. Resources are very well used for a variety of role-play situations both indoors and outdoors. The children participate in these imaginatively as they act out roles such as travel agents, or people living in a caravan and in the outdoor playhouses. On occasions, the opportunities for the children to further use their imagination and creativity by choosing their own materials and subjects could be extended to complement the very good teaching of skills and knowledge in this area of the Foundation Stage curriculum. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

## **ENGLISH**

66. The results of the statutory assessment tests for seven-year-olds in 2001 showed that standards were below the national average in reading and writing and well below average when compared to similar schools. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that standards have risen slightly, especially in reading where standards are in line with those expected, but are still below those expected by the end of Year 2 in writing. The quality of work in Year 1 indicates that standards will continue to improve because the teaching is very effective and builds on the very good work being done in the Reception year. The standard of writing for Year 2 is below that expected of pupils this age. Writing standards remain below average in Year 2 and are not improving as well as they are in reading.
67. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils make very good progress, consequently, by the time pupils are at the end of Year 4 the vast majority are well in line to achieve the standards expected for their age. Although the pupils in Years 1 and 2 are eager to talk, to hold conversations and to give answers to questions, for the majority, their limited vocabulary prevents them from doing so effectively. Initially they listen carefully, however they lose concentration easily especially when lessons are slow in pace or questions do not challenge. This was particularly evident in a Year 2 class when a group of pupils with special educational needs, sitting apart from the main class, had difficulty in following the text and in both hearing and understanding the teacher's questions. However, in another lesson, when withdrawn to an adjacent area to work with a learning support assistant, the concentration and enthusiasm of these pupils was much improved. The pupils in Year 1 were observed discussing the Queen as part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations and how a typical day for her unfolds. The teacher had prepared a suitably challenging text and encouraged the pupils to read it together. Because of previous work they were able to decode multi segment words like 'minister' and 'ambassador' and 'hospital'. Questions required pupils to think and give reasons for their answers and pupils of all abilities were positively encouraged to take part. Although the pupils are encouraged to use adjectives, they were not urged to think of better words from a broader range which could

have been found in, say, dictionaries or word banks. However, reading standards are improving and at the end of the key stage standards are in line with those expected.

68. More able pupils in Years 1 and 2 read fluently with expression and accuracy. They are able to decode unknown words by building phonemes and segments and attempt these confidently. Although they are able to retell what has happened in their story so far, they are often reluctant to say what they think might happen next or to hypothesise as to why characters act as they do. More able and average attaining pupils make good progress in reading because teachers use consistent and effective strategies to teach letter sounds. This strategy is used in the groups and shared reading sessions during literacy lessons. It is consistently taught from the Reception year and is built on in Years 1 and 2 so that the pupils are able to read unfamiliar words and self-correct using their good knowledge of letter sounds in words. Lower attaining pupils are reliant on picture clues and familiar high frequency words. Most pupils understand the purpose of author, illustrator, title, contents and index and some could explain what a glossary is used for. However, the majority of pupils do not have sound library skills and none could name any authors usually familiar to pupils of this age.
69. The pupils in Year 1 are encouraged to take care with their writing and form letters correctly; consequently, this improves their attitudes to the presentation of their work. Teachers have high expectations and remind and encourage continually. Because of this the pupils were observed attempting to write interesting sentences about the Queen indicating the passing of time. For example, they started sentences with, 'Early in the morning', 'Later' and 'After a while'. Their writing books show that they have made good progress over the year. The pupils in Year 2 are practising comprehension skills. Higher and average attaining pupils have differentiated work set for them. They are able to read and answer questions varying in complexity and because the teachers have selected interesting texts and most pupils concentrate hard. However, the scrutiny of pupils' books reveals slower progress in Year 2 than in Year 1. Only a few pupils pay attention to the presentation of their work suggesting that lower expectations are set by the teaching. The vast majority write clumsily and often untidily, forming letters incorrectly and use a mixture of upper and lower case with both script and cursive styles of handwriting. Moreover, their books reveal that high praise is often given for very untidy and sometimes incorrect work. Consequently, by the end of Year 2, few pupils use extended punctuation, such as speech marks, question and exclamation marks or commas correctly. They are aware that stories must have a beginning middle and an end, however, the language used in stories and creative work lacks richness and variety.
70. In Year 3, the teachers set very high expectations and lessons move along with good pace and much rigour, so that the pupils make rapid progress. The tasks set and expectations of presentation of work are explained clearly and questions challenge the pupils to think of varied answers. Teachers continually endeavour to widen and enrich pupils' vocabulary. This was evident in a literacy lesson where language to describe a storm was discussed. The pupils were enthused and worked hard to develop good descriptive phrases, for example, 'Crackling thunder lights the garden, whistling wind covers my ears' and 'thunder oozes from the sky'. They enjoy creating poetry and have attempted Japanese style verse and poetry called Haiku. The pupils are encouraged to read at every opportunity and this too helps develop their vocabulary well. Books available for them are wide and varied and they are encouraged to enjoy poetry and comic strips as well as fiction and non-fiction. In quiet sessions they enjoy books together, sharing the text, reading to each other or discussing the story line enjoying the humour and hypothesising what will happen. By the end of Year 4, reading standards are well in line for most pupils to reach and some to exceed those expected for their age. Higher attaining pupils are able to discuss texts sensibly. They begin to understand nuances in

language and play on words and to relate story lines to others they have read. However, across the year group, few pupils can name the wide variety of authors expected at this age.

71. By the end of Year 4, writing skills improve well and the scrutiny of pupils' books shows considerable progress in presentation, handwriting and quality and quantity of work over Year 3 and good progress through Year 4. Stories begin to have more interesting themes and, building on previous work, are suitably structured. Extended punctuation is introduced and pupils try to include colourful phrasing, for example, 'I froze at the sight...', 'I burst with joy'. In Year 4, teachers build well on standards set in Year 3. The pupils have enjoyed the work of Colin Thompson and have written alternative endings to some of his stories such as 'Tower to the Sun' and 'Paper Bag Prince'. They have tried to emulate his style by writing stories where the main characters change as in his books. Most use punctuation correctly and for many, their handwriting is developing into a fluent, legible and mature style. The pupils in both Year 3 and 4 benefit from the rich language environment provided for them. Prompt words are large and pertinent and word banks, dictionaries and thesauruses are visible and accessible. Word investigations and roots of words encourage the pupils to think beyond the mundane. The pupils' written work is attractively displayed and valued. Careful attention is paid to pupils at both ends of the special educational need spectrum to enable them to reach their potential so that both the lower attaining and higher attaining pupils achieve well. Information and communication technology is used appropriately to display work and pupils understand the effect that different printing styles and fonts have on writing when using word processing skills.
72. The National Literacy Strategy has been suitably introduced. The coordinator has endeavoured to ensure that all newly qualified teachers have had sufficient training and has supported them by exemplar lessons, monitoring their teaching and running in-service training sessions. The senior management team are concerned about the writing standards in the national tests for seven-year-olds. They have investigated the roots of this low attainment and the co-ordinator has now introduced a writing programme which aims to apply more consistent expectations for pupils' writing, especially in Year 2. So far, this has been introduced in the Reception year and in Year 1 and will work through the school. It can already be seen to have an impact on the quality of written work seen in Year 1.
73. All the teaching seen was satisfactory and almost all was good or very good. Planning is thorough building year on year but there are inconsistencies in parts of the school. In Years 3 and 4 particularly, teachers use assessment well to ascertain what pupils know and can do and what they need to do next. The most significant inconsistencies and weaknesses in the teaching were found in Year 2 and this is evident in the presentation of work produced by the pupils, especially in the quality and range of their writing. There is a general lack of consistency of expectation, which is reflected in the lack of progress made in the development of pupils' writing skills. By the end of Year 3, the pupils make rapid progress and this is demonstrated best in their written work that shows very good progress in relation to the low standards achieved in writing at the end of Year 2.
74. The co-ordinator has worked extremely hard in the last year to support and motivate staff and raise expectations. She has consulted the local authority's English advisers and they have approved of her ideas to raise standards. Together with a colleague, she has furthered her own knowledge and understanding by studying for an Advanced Literacy Diploma and she has used this experience to enthuse and enlighten the staff. Literary initiatives, Book Week, World Book Day and a Sponsored Spell In, have helped to raise the profile of literacy.

## MATHEMATICS

75. Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 2 are below average and by the end of Year 4, they are in line with those expected. By the time the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4 they have made good progress.
76. The end of key stage national tests for Year 2 pupils show that in 2001, and for the previous 3 years, attainment has been well below the national average. However, evidence gained during this inspection shows that standards are beginning to rise. This is occurring because of improving teaching standards, the leadership of the present co-ordinator and the effects of the National Numeracy Strategy that has now become established. No national test information is available for nine-year-old pupils in Year 4 but the evidence gained during this inspection shows that the pupils make good progress. This is due mainly to the good standard of teaching seen in Years 3 and 4. There are no significant differences in the achievements of girls and boys and the progress of the pupils with special educational needs does not differ from that made by the other pupils.
77. By the end of Year 2, the pupils can work out simple problems involving number operations and money. Most of the pupils know the values of the different coins and can add simple amounts together but the more able pupils are sometimes not challenged sufficiently, and therefore do not make the progress that they are capable of. They understand the value of each digit in numbers up to a hundred but few of the pupils carry out calculations using these numbers. The pupils use different methods for calculating, such as using their knowledge of how simple addition facts can help to solve larger problems and using addition facts to help them solve subtraction problems. When considering shapes, they know the names and simple properties of a range of two-dimensional shapes. They estimate and measure using non-standard and standard units, but these skills are not practised sufficiently in real practical situations. Most of the pupils can tell the time to the hour and half hour, but a large proportion are not confident in telling the time to a quarter of an hour or less. Very few of the pupils can link the times shown on analogue clocks to digital ones. The pupils collect their own data about favourite foods and the types of cars passing the school. They then draw graphs to show their results, and from these and other graphs, can answer simple questions. The standard of the pupils' presentation of work is low and inconsistent, especially in Year 2 where expectations vary so that the pupils produce some untidy work.
78. By the end of Year 4, the pupils calculate and solve problems involving larger numbers. They use different methods in their calculations, involving the use of number lines and number splitting techniques. Some of the pupils are beginning to use decimal calculations in their money work and most of the pupils know that different fractions can have the same values. They plot co-ordinate points in the first quadrant and know some of the properties of different triangles. The pupils' work on co-ordinates is very well supported in geography where map work is a strong feature. Reflective symmetry is well understood by most pupils, who can identify and plot symmetrical shapes across various lines of symmetry. In Year 4, the teachers use an 'interactive white board' linked to a computer for this work, and this experience enhanced the learning of the pupils. The pupils calculate the areas of more complex shapes and in other measurement work can choose the appropriate units of measurement to use depending upon the scale of the task. Although the pupils can tally using scaled symbols and interpret information from some graphs, they have too little experience in carrying out the full process for themselves. They also have too little opportunity of using these types of skills in other subjects or of using computer based programs for this type of work.

79. Evidence from previous work shows that the progress made by the pupils by the end of Year 2 was unsatisfactory and that teachers placed too little demand on the pupils. This situation is now improving and during this inspection the overall standard of teaching seen was good. The progress made by the pupils is now increasing and standards are beginning to rise. However, the teachers still need to improve the match of work to the pupils' abilities, especially for the more able pupils. In Years 3 and 4, the standard of teaching is good overall, but here too the teachers need to improve still further the match of work for the more able pupils.
80. The teachers show in their use of language, explanations and careful questioning that they have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics. For instance in a Year 2 lesson the teacher stressed the importance of number strategies and encouraged the pupils' to use and share different strategies to solve mental arithmetic problems involving a number square. In some lessons the teacher discusses with the pupils at the beginning what they are going to learn and this helps to focus the pupils' attention on their learning. Sometimes these objectives and important mathematical vocabulary form part of the final recap of the lesson and consolidate what the pupils have learnt. In a Year 3 lesson, the teacher, as well as using the plenary to consolidate the work of the lesson, also used it to link and extend the pupils work on directions with work on co-ordinates. Teachers usually plan the pupils' work to meet the needs of different ability levels but the work for the more able pupils is sometimes less well planned and does not extend their thinking and knowledge quickly enough.
81. Throughout the school the teachers' management and discipline of the pupils is good, and often very good in Years 3 and 4. The pupils respond positively to this, showing good attitudes to their work and good behaviour. This means that the pupils' learning is well supported because they are more attentive to what they are being taught and the tasks they have to complete. The teachers give good levels of deserved praise that encourages learning and raises the self-esteem of pupils. In most lessons the pupils relate well to each other and their teachers, and they co-operate well with each other when asked to do so in their work.
82. In very good lessons the pace of learning is brisk and the pupils are kept actively engaged in appropriately challenging and stimulating tasks, from which they gain a feeling of success. In these lessons the teacher's enthusiasm enlivens the work of the pupils and raises their enjoyment for learning. When the teaching is satisfactory the pace of pupils' learning is not as fast. This is the result of work that is not as well matched to pupils' abilities. In these lessons the pupils are not questioned as rigorously about how they got their answers and less praise is given to stimulate and raise the pupils' involvement.
83. The mathematics co-ordinator presents a good teaching model. She is committed to the continued improvement of pupils' attainment in mathematics, especially by the end of Year 2 where attainment still remains below average. She monitors teaching and learning of mathematics in the school well. Her analysis of assessments is also developing well and has already identified areas for improvement.

## **SCIENCE**

84. At the age of seven and by the time the pupils leave the school at nine years of age, standards in science are in line with those expected nationally. The pupils make good progress and achieve well in science. The standards at the time of the last inspection were found to be average in Key Stage 1 and above average by the time the pupils left the school.

85. The pupils enjoy their science lessons, they concentrate well and try hard. This is because the lessons are interesting and often involve practical activities. The teaching is successfully addressing the need for the pupils to describe and record what they see and do in science investigations and to identify for themselves what makes a 'fair test'. The teachers give the pupils good opportunities to investigate, use their initiative and try out their ideas. The teachers ask good quality questions and value the answers and suggestions that pupils make and give. They ensure that the teaching helps the pupils to acquire a useful vocabulary of scientific terms.
86. The younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn to identify sources of light and test different lighting conditions to see which gives the best view of a teddy bear. They can name external parts of the body and of plants. They know the names of common materials and can test and select the best material for making an umbrella. By the time they are seven the pupils can construct a simple electrical circuit and identify which circuits will light a bulb or not. They learn that changes in materials can be reversible or irreversible whilst working with cake mixture, ice and melted chocolate. They investigate the lifecycles of frogs and butterflies and carry out a survey of mini-beasts found in the school grounds. In Year 3, the pupils work on constructing a healthy diet and how to care for their teeth. They can explain why we have night and day. They have a satisfactory understanding of forces by working on experiments with 'pulls', 'pushes' and 'stretches'. Year 4 pupils learn to identify the bones in skeletons and how muscles work. They carry out fair tests to see which reaches the floor first, for example, a crumpled sheet or flat sheet of paper. They can classify animals into vertebrates and invertebrates and relate them to their habitats.
87. During the inspection the quality of teaching seen was good. Six lessons were seen, five of which were good and one very good. The lessons were well organised, they contained a good balance of teacher-lead input and investigative work for the pupils. The pupils were well managed and good use was made of teaching assistants and other helpers, including some parents. Lessons were completed with useful plenary sessions when the teachers could revisit the teaching points and check what the pupils had learned. All aspects of the science curriculum are planned for and covered although on some occasions work is repeated at a similar level and this hampers the pupils from making better progress. For example, work on which materials will or will not conduct electricity is tackled at the same level in Year 4 as in Year 2. There is limited use of information and communication technology (ICT) skills in science. However, some very good work was seen when Year 4 used an ICT program to produce a branching logic tree to pose questions and then classify mini-beasts. The teachers do not often identify in their planning work which challenges and extends the most able pupils and resulting in a satisfactory rate of progress for these pupils rather than very good progress. The school has identified the need to improve how they check the pupils' rates of progress. The science co-ordinator is in the early stages of putting some systems in place to do this which will include procedures that enable the teachers to use assessment information to better inform their planning.
88. The management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator helps other teachers by improving the teachers' subject expertise and improving the resources that are available to support teaching and learning. A strength of the school is the way in which science is used to provide very good opportunities to develop the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and to extend their personal development. The pupils are taught to value and care for their own environment and to see beauty and order in aspects of the natural and manmade world. Visits and visitors to the school are used to enhance the science curriculum. In the week following

the inspection a week of interesting scientific challenges and learning is planned to augment science lessons.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

89. By the time they are seven and when the pupils leave the school after Year 4, their attainment in art and design is above that expected for their age. All the pupils make good progress in knowledge and understanding, and in developing skills in art and design. This area of the curriculum is a strength of the school and shows a good improvement since the previous inspection.
90. The pupils create good quality work throughout the school. They enjoy art and design activities, work with enthusiasm, and concentrate well and try hard to achieve the effect they want. Good use is made of sketchbooks to try different techniques and media before starting on a finished piece of work. The pupils have good opportunities to evaluate their own and others' work, they make mature, perceptive comments displaying a good standard of knowledge of line, form, and colour. They can identify what is good about a picture and suggest how it could be improved. The adults in the school support this work very well by valuing the pupils' efforts and helping them to develop confidence and self-esteem in working on artistic projects.
91. In Year 1, the pupils produce lively black and white self-portraits using mirrors. They weave wools of different hues to create a very good effect. By the time they are seven they can use their colour mixing skills to paint animals. They make good use of ICT skills, for example, to design and make book covers. The older pupils' work is mainly linked to other areas of the curriculum. In Year 3, the pupils assemble patterns using the shapes they are investigating in mathematics. They use paint and pastels to display features of art from Ancient Greece in history lessons, for example, depicting gods and goddesses and the decoration found on vases. In Year 4, some of the work is outstanding. The pupils have drawn representations of artifacts from African countries. They show a mature use of shading techniques to show pots and other containers. They produce striking images of masks using a variety of chalks and pastels. When studying maps in geography they work with textiles, papers, paint and other materials to show aerial views of landscapes. The most impressive features of the work seen were the pictures showing an imaginary journey.
92. The quality of teaching is good. Three good lessons were seen during the inspection. The pupils' work is very well displayed around the school. The teachers plan and organise the lessons well. They have high expectations of the pupils and match the tasks to their capabilities. The planning makes good use of sketchbooks on a regular basis to practice drawing out and the pupils enjoy trying new techniques. The lessons are interesting and on occasions inspiring. Teachers give the pupils good opportunities to experience and use a very good range of media and materials. The pupils are well managed in the lessons, their confidence is boosted and as a result they make the good progress seen.
93. The management of the subject is good. The school's overall planning of art and design makes very good links with other subjects. The art and design curriculum is exciting and the school makes very good use of visitors and visits to stimulate pupils' interest and to teach techniques and crafts. It is a strength of the school that art and design is used to provide very good opportunities to develop the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and to extend and enrich their personal development. A good example of this is seen in the display of Year 4 work in the foyer. The pupils listened to a piece of music, 'Morning', from Grieg's



Peer Gynt Suite. They then drew pictures expressing the feelings engendered by the music in calm dreamlike pastel landscapes of good quality.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

94. No lessons were seen during this inspection because design and technology is taught in half-termly blocks, alternating with art and design. However, examples of pupils' work were checked and some pupils discussed their work with an inspector. Standards are in line with those expected by Year 2 and Year 4. The previous inspection found design and technology to be weak and standards were below those expected at that time. The school has made good improvements to the curriculum and standards have risen as a result.
95. Evidence from the pupils' previous work suggests that they are expected to research and plan their work, and decide which materials should be used. For example, evaluations of simple mechanisms when making puppets and descriptions of robots made from a range of materials as part of a home and school project which involved parents and pupils making robots to decorate the new and aptly named "Sonic Room" (a combined ICT and workroom). The school has adopted the national scheme of work for design and technology and this leads to a consistent and development approach that helps the pupils to build on previous learning.
96. The design and technology (DT) scheme enables the teachers to link topics covered in other subjects to specific DT skills. For example, the pupils in Year 2 produced some good plans of a sweetshop as part of their literacy topic about a story called, "Mr. Magic's Sweetshop". Throughout the school, the pupils produced some interesting mechanisms when producing puppets which were made as part of a puppet making workshop led by a visiting theatre group from Norwich. Some very good multi-cultural studies led to older pupils in Year 4 visiting a mock African Village representing life in Ghana. The pupils were taught to make traditional Ghanaian food and they produced interesting written accounts of how the food was made and how the climate and natural environment contribute to the nature of the food and the way Ghanaian people live. Other topics include links to history work where the pupils have studied life in Ancient Greece and have produced card and paper models of the Parthenon and older pupils have made masks representing characters in stories, such as the Medusa and the Minotaur. Good use is made of computers when Year 3 and Year 4 pupils produced book covers for their stories. They designed the covers and used an interesting arrangement of graphics and text to produce some interesting and varied designs.
97. The staff teach design and technology with increasing confidence because the co-ordinator has produced useful plans and gives advice to help link topics to other subjects of the curriculum. The co-ordinator recognises that assessment needs to be improved and this has been identified as an area for whole-school improvement.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

98. During the inspection a limited number of geography lessons were observed. Further evidence was gained from looking at pupils' work and through talking to teachers and the pupils. The standards achieved are in line with those expected by the end of year 2 and Year 4 and the pupils make satisfactory progress
99. By the end of Year 2, pupils know some of the common plants and animals of temperate, desert and polar regions of the world. The pupils know about different destinations in this and other countries and how you could travel there. They know about different features in their

immediate area. Features such as houses, museums, rivers, parks and churches are then placed on a large sketch map of the area. The pupils know about facilities available in their local area and can place some of these on their own simple sketch map. They make good progress in their map work where they use simple keys and symbols to draw plans. They also read and use simple co-ordinates well, and place and identify features on simple grids and maps.

100. The good mapping skills work achieved in Years 1 and 2 are developed further in Years 3 and 4. By the end of Year 4 the pupils draw their own simple Ordnance Survey style maps using a key and Ordnance Survey symbols, including contour lines to show features such as hills. They are also beginning to read and use two figure co-ordinates. The pupils also use their mapping skills to show their knowledge of why settlements were, and are, located in certain places. Year 4 pupils produced some good work using aerial photographs, translating photographs into pictures using a variety of material from crayon to fabric collage. By the end of Year 4, the pupils know about the African country of Ghana. They know about its climate, agriculture, and the daily life of its people. When studying this country they give their thoughts on the similarities and differences between Ghanaian life and their own.
101. The pupils' work in geography is enhanced by the good range of visits and visitors that the pupils experience. Visits to places such as, Aklowa a recreated Ghanaian village, Jubilee Fields, Wicken Fen and Thornham Field Study Centre. The limited number of lessons seen during this inspection were all of a good standard. The pupils are challenged appropriately by the work they are doing and they responded well by working hard and making good progress. The teachers stress the use of correct geographical language and the pace of lessons is such that the pupils are kept active and involved in their learning. Probing questions are asked which enabled the pupils to give detailed answers.
102. The monitoring of teaching and learning by the subject co-ordinator is at an early stage of development, but she has already identified some ways in which teaching and learning may be improved. Assessment procedures are being developed and these should give further information to teachers when they consider their future planning.

## **HISTORY**

103. During the inspection only one history lesson was observed. Looking at pupils' work and talking to teachers and pupils provided further evidence. The standards achieved are in line with those expected by the end of Years 2 and 4 and the pupils make satisfactory progress
104. By the end of Year 2, the pupils know about some famous people from the past, for example, Guy Fawkes and Florence Nightingale. When learning about these people they write about them in their own words. After finding out about the Fire of London, and Samuel Pepys' eyewitness account, they try to write their own diary about the fire of 1666. In these ways they are not only learning about historical stories and sources of information, but they are also improving the range of their writing skills. The pupils know about life in castles in the past and compare castles with the homes of today. They also compare their school with schools in the past and compare objects from the past and present.
105. By the end of Year 4, the pupils know about life in Ancient Greece. They know that this is where the Olympic games started and they write a guidebook about the Parthenon. The pupils know some of the stories of Ancient Greece, such as the ones about the Trojan Horse and the Minotaur. They know about the clothes that were worn and during their Greek Day at school

they dress up in Greek costumes. When studying Ancient Greek pottery they look for clues in the decorations and pictures of what life was like in those times. The pupils know about the Roman invasion of Britain and about the resistance of leaders such as Boudicca. By writing as if they were a Roman soldier sending a letter home, and through writing as if they were describing their own Roman house they gain a greater understanding of what life was like in ancient Roman times. Visits to museums and the visit of a 'Roman Soldier' from Colchester Castle museum also help the pupils' historical knowledge and understanding.

106. The range of visits and visitors that have an historical theme adds positively to the curricular experiences of the pupils. These include visits to Mildenhall Museum, Hedingham Castle, and the visit to school of staff from the Imperial War Museum (Duxford) to show what life was like in World War Two. In the one lesson observed in Year 1, the teaching was good. With the assistance of school produced artefacts, pupil participation, video evidence and probing questioning, the teacher methodically taught the pupils about the coronation of the present Queen Elizabeth as part of the topical theme related to the Queen's Golden Jubilee.
107. Assessment procedures are at an early stage of development, but the co-ordinator is determined to see that they are useful and manageable. The monitoring of teaching and learning by the co-ordinator is also at an early stage of development but is satisfactory overall.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

108. Standards seen in information and communications technology (ICT) are in line with those expected at the age seven and nine. Standards have improved well since the last inspection because the school has improved resources and teachers' expertise. The new computer suite was installed the year after the last inspection. It has had a positive impact on standards, but the room is too small for whole class sessions and this is uncomfortable for both the pupils and staff. However, the evidence suggests that the pupils are achieving well and making good progress. The pupils usually work in pairs and this is helpful to pupils with special educational needs, who make good progress.
109. By Year 2, the pupils can use the keyboard and mouse with confidence to operate drawing programmes and access games, stories and information. For example, they can find out about animals and their habitats. They can control programmable toys and make them move in different directions. By Year 4, the pupils can search the Internet for relevant information on a specific topic and also retrieve information from CD ROMs. Very good use is made of the Suffolk Learning and Management Network (SLAMNET). This is used by the pupils to post bulletins on the Internet for parents and other interested groups. The pupils can use a graphics and text program to construct a story by combining text and graphics. They can draw and modify pictures as well as save and import graphic files to combine these with text to produce book covers, bulletins, posters and news headlines. They can load programs, print and save their work. They can choose the colour and font for text that they write or adapt from a model, and they have experience of entering data on to a spreadsheet.
110. Pupils have good attitudes to ICT. They enjoy working in the computer suite and also using the machines in their classrooms. The pupils behave well and they respect the equipment, but the limited space in the ICT suite affects the concentration of some pupils. The pupils take pride in the work they complete and print out. In Year 4, very good use was made of a program called "Flexi Tree". The pupils enjoyed experimenting with questions they could pose related to animals and their habitats as part of their science topic. One group of pupils enjoyed adding a touch of humour to their question as they experimented with the effect a question

would have on the outcome of a logic tree if they asked whether an insect, “could crawl into your ear”. All the pupils produced branching logic trees which could be investigated by other pupils. The program enabled the pupils to self-correct and edit their questions to best suit the outcome.

111. In the two full ICT lessons observed together with observations of ICT used in other subjects or as part of literacy and numeracy lessons, and scrutiny of the work saved in pupils’ files, suggest that the teaching is good. Very good use is made of the interactive whiteboard which teachers use to demonstrate to the class. For example, very good use was made of the white board when Year 4 pupils, during a mathematics lesson in the interactive “Sonic Room”, used the interactive board to demonstrate their knowledge of line symmetry. The teacher asked the pupils to touch the board which instantly illuminated coloured shapes across a line of symmetry. In this way teachers make very good use of this powerful visual aid. There has been good and effective training for staff and their confidence is increasing as they use the facilities. Good links are beginning to be made with mathematics, science, geography, history and design technology. The teacher co-ordinating ICT is moving the subject forward well and recognises that there is still much to do. Schemes of work are fully in place. The recording of pupils’ work on disk has begun and this will form a basis for assessing skills and progress.

## MUSIC

112. Two lessons of music were observed during the inspection period, one in each key stage. Other evidence was gained from listening to music played or songs sung by the pupils in assembly, talking to pupils and teachers and scrutinising teachers’ planning. By the end of Year 2 and Year 4 standards in music are above those expected. A high standard of music was also found at the last inspection.
113. Throughout the school the vast majority of pupils enjoy singing. This they do mostly in assembly accompanied by a competent pianist. They sing a variety of songs and hymns following words on an overhead projector. Their attention is drawn to posture, diction and dynamics and they sing with good phrasing, observing the length of notes and mastering rhythms well. The pupils in Year 1, as part of a musical topic on Carnival, listened to a calypso of ‘Three Blind Mice’ and quickly captured the lively tune. Encouraged by their teacher, they were able to clap out the rhythm and move freely to the music. As the lesson progressed they were able to keep time with more complicated rhythms and to make up movements that matched the rhythms. They thoroughly enjoyed this activity and as the teacher had high expectations, by the end of the lesson, from notation, the pupils were able to ‘read’ the notation and clap out a four beat rhythm containing crotchets, quavers and minims. The pupils in Year 4 were observed composing music that illustrated the journey of a river. They had a very good knowledge of musical vocabulary and understood how pitch, dynamics and texture could influence their work and how tempo would indicate the stages of the river’s journey. In groups, they had already written simple word scores and now practised their compositions for the rest of the class using percussion instruments. The pupils depicting the waterfall effectively portrayed water slipping over the edge with tambourine and water crashing to the ground with a drum roll. Others used tuned percussion to depict the river’s bend and others added texture by purposefully including ostinato on drums and tambour. They now intend to connect their individual pieces before playing the full composition to other classes.
114. The pupils throughout the school have listened to Grieg’s music ‘Morning’ from ‘Pier Gynt’ and have then effectively recreated their feelings in pastel pictures. Older pupils in Years 3

and 4 have listened to this music and have written accounts of how the music influences their feelings and emotions. They have written some perceptive accounts, for example, 'I thought about day break and sunrise', 'It made me feel warm'. Similarly having heard a piece from Charles Ives' 'Central park in the dark', one pupil wrote, 'It felt creepy and made me feel confused, but alert'. All the pupils enjoy music. They say how they enjoy using instruments and conducting. They enjoy the special musical festivities at Easter, Harvest and Christmas and mention the new compact discs introduced in assembly or as incidental music.

115. In both the lessons seen the quality of teaching was very good. Teachers gave the pupils freedom to experiment with sounds and rhythms and this enabled them to develop ideas and to benefit from personal experiences. Although teachers are not specialists they plan carefully following the scheme chosen by the school and this ensure that the pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and expertise continuously and progressively. Furthermore, teachers ensure that all pupils are included in practice and performance and those who have specific special educational needs are catered for well. One boy is particularly gifted in music. Both the pupils and teachers are aware of, and respect, his special ability, in both singing and piano. The school has alerted specific specialists and is monitoring his progress. Special provision is made for him to perform for his peers or the whole school.
116. The music co-ordinator has worked hard during her short time in the school. She has ensured that all the teachers are supported and has monitored provision and planning and taken an audit of resources. She has observed lessons and discussed ideas with teachers. She has drawn up action plans that will help to develop the subject and teachers' planning further.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

117. Six lessons of physical education including one swimming lesson were observed during the inspection period. These covered games skills in Years 1 and 2 and gymnastics, games skills and swimming in Years 3 and 4. Other evidence was gained from looking at photographs, talking to pupils and teachers and looking at teachers' planning. The evidence suggests that the standards pupils achieve by the end of Year 2 and Year 4 are in line with those expected for their age. The teaching is good and the pupils make good progress in physical education.
118. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 are practising early athletic skills. As the object of lessons is explained to them carefully they are clear about what they have to do and work hard. After a good warm up session and a quick reminder of safety rules, they practise throwing beanbags over arm, do standing jumps and time their partners as they perform a quick sprint. They work with enthusiasm ensuring that all rules are followed. The pupils conscientiously aim to beat their personal best scores, times or lengths when jumping or throwing. Another group were observed practising their tennis skills. They keep their eye on the ball bouncing to each other and catching with care. When they use a racquet almost all are able to hit a ball thrown to them. They too are aware of rules and praise each other for successes. Because the teachers are always on hand to give support and show the correct techniques, the pupils make good progress.
119. In Year 3, the pupils are practising games skills ready for playing rounders. They watch the ball carefully and, when batting, stand side ways on to the bowler and aim for an empty area between fielders. They practice hard and are rewarded with a quick game that they thoroughly enjoy. The pupils are beginning to understand the principles of teamwork and

support each other well. Those with special educational needs are always included and are well supported by the learning support assistants, the teacher and other pupils. The pupils in Year 4 were seen perfecting balancing techniques during a gymnastics lesson. They use their bodies sensibly to balance in a small area and to change places in a limited space. The pupils who were seen swimming worked hard following the teachers' instructions carefully to improve their stroke and their speed. Photographic evidence indicates that pupils have good opportunities for movement and dance. They use their bodies well working in pairs or groups effectively. The pupils take good care of equipment using and storing it carefully.

120. The quality of teaching seen was at least satisfactory, most often good and sometimes very good. Where lessons were particularly well organised pupils moved through activities at a good pace developing skills well. When lessons where only satisfactory time was not used effectively and pupils spent too much time listening to instructions and explanations and too little time in physical activity, which led to some restlessness and inattentiveness. In the swimming lesson observed, the teacher was suitably qualified and knowledgeable, pacing the lesson well to give rigorous and then slower activities. The learning support assistant was used effectively to support a pupil with special physical problems.
121. The co-ordinator works hard supporting teachers and ensuring the correct implementation of the Suffolk Scheme. She monitors teaching and learning and offers advice to staff. She has introduced the new scheme for all areas of physical education and ensured that the resources are available to support activities. In order to widen pupils' experiences, she runs lunchtime and after-school football and cricket sessions. Visiting specialists are encouraged to take workshops, for example, the junior coach from Ipswich Town Football Club and the Dance Adviser from the local authority.