

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MICHAEL'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Tilehurst, Reading

LEA area: Reading

Unique reference number: 109796

Acting Headteacher: Mrs K Budd

Reporting inspector: Mrs Janet Gill
18706

Dates of inspection: 11th to 14th November 2002

Inspection number: 246935

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 5 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Dee Road
Tilehurst
Reading
Berkshire

Postcode: RG30 4AS

Telephone number: 0118 901 5550

Fax number: 0118 901 5549

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Margaret Fletcher

Date of previous inspection: January 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18706	Mrs Janet Gill	Registered inspector	English Art and design History Foundation stage	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
19664	Mr John Bayliss	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?
19765	Pauleen Shannon	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Geography Music Religious education Educational Inclusion	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
8710	Julie Moore	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Physical education English as an additional language	How well is the school led and managed?
23412	Alvin Jeffs	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

The inspection contractor was:

Arden Inspections

University of Warwick Science Park
Unit 2, Barclays Venture Centre
Sir William Lyons Road
Coventry CV4 7EZ

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Michael's Primary school is situated in Tilehurst, Reading. There are 186 pupils on roll aged from five to 11 years with 88 boys and 98 girls. There are six classes – all full except Year 5. The school is about the same size as at the time of the previous inspection and is of average size. Overall children's attainment on entry is below average – there are fewer with higher attainment than previously. Around a quarter of pupils are from diverse ethnic backgrounds, which is high. Nine pupils speak English as an additional language, with five at an early stage of English acquisition, but these pupils do not receive any external additional support. The most frequent languages spoken at home are Panjabi, Gujarati and Bengali. There are no refugees but a few traveller pupils. There is little unemployment in the area and currently 30 pupils (16%) pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is around average. Over a third of pupils have special educational needs and eight have statements of special educational need, which is above average. There are seven pupils with sensory impairments in two Resource Bases, but most of the time these pupils are integrated into classes and work mostly with their peers. The number of pupils both entering and leaving the school at times other than the usual time is higher than usual; in addition difficulties in recruiting teachers over the last two academic years, has had an adverse impact on standards in Years 5 and 6.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Michael's Primary School provides a satisfactory education overall. Attainment in English, mathematics and science is good in Years 1 to 4 and pupils make good progress from below average starting points. The overall quality of teaching is good with three-quarters being good or better. Pupils behave well, have positive attitudes and very good respect for each other's cultural and ethnic backgrounds and disabilities. Pupils are included very well in all aspects of school life. There are weaknesses in some aspects of the school's leadership. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is good, particularly in Years 1 to 4, which helps pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in this particularly caring school, where relationships are very good and all pupils are included very effectively in all aspects of school life.
- A good promotion of spiritual, social, moral and cultural development helps to promote respect and understanding for others and an appreciation of different cultures through art and design and music.
- The school makes good provision for pupils with sensory impairments and other special educational needs – this helps them to make good progress.
- Procedures for promoting good attendance are very effective and, as a result of new strategies, the school has been successful in reducing unauthorised absence to the average level.

What could be improved

- The acting management team and governors do not have a clear enough view of the way ahead.
- Standards are not high enough in English, mathematics and science in Year 6.
- Standards in information and communication technology are not high enough because some aspects of the curriculum are not covered.
- Some aspects of the curriculum and provision for children in the Foundation Stage.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There have been satisfactory improvements since the school was last inspected in January 1998. Most of the weaknesses identified have been addressed. Attendance has improved and pupils have better opportunities to carry out research and develop their enquiry skills. Pupils' attainment has remained above average in the core subjects in Year 2. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 to 4 due to good teaching and stable staffing – these features are improving now for older pupils. Assessment has improved in English and mathematics and is now good but it is not rigorous enough in other subjects.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	D	D	E	E*
Mathematics	C	D	E*	E*
Science	B	C	E	E

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
well below average	E
lowest 5% nationally	E*

Standards at the end of Year 2 have improved since the last inspection, but they are below or well below average, at the end of Year 6. The overall trend for improvement in the core subjects is broadly average. However, standards were lower in the National tests in 2002. This is because a significant number of pupils joined or left the class and there was a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs in this particular class, but comparisons to their prior attainment in Year 2 shows satisfactory progress overall. In addition, difficulties in recruiting teachers for older pupils have had an adverse impact on the progress made by pupils. In the 2002, Year 6 National Curriculum tests, standards were well below average in English and science and in the lowest five per cent in mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, pupils performed within the lowest five per cent in English and mathematics and well below average in science. Results in science were better because a good proportion gained the average level. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are better in Year 6 in all three subjects, but there are too few pupils working at the higher Level 5. Therefore, standards overall are below average. In other subjects, standards are average except for information and communication technology where it is below average.

Children enter Reception with below average attainment; they make good progress and continue to achieve well throughout Years 1 to 4, but progress has been unsatisfactory in Years 5 and 6. There have been significant staffing changes in the upper part of the school and these have affected the pupils' performance. This has held back their progress in previous years. Staffing has stabilised and these older pupils are now making better progress, especially in Year 6. Standards were particularly good in the Year 2, 2002 National tests when standards were well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics and also in science according to teacher assessment. Inspection evidence shows that present pupils are not such high achievers, but nevertheless achieve well, and standards are average in English and mathematics, although better in reading and above average in science. Standards in other subjects are average, except for design and technology and physical education, where they are above. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well. Those from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve the same as other pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy school, have positive attitudes towards it and are interested in their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour is usually good and frequently very good in lessons. During lunch and playtimes it is good or very good with no inappropriate behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Pupils play well together and care for each other. Integration of pupils from the resource bases is very good because pupils have a positive respect for each other's differences.

Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance levels show significant improvement. The level of unauthorised absence has been reduced and is now average. The majority of pupils are punctual in arriving for school.
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The school's very good systems for monitoring attendance and lateness together with pupils' good behaviour and attitudes are having a positive impact on their learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good in Years 1 to 4, with a very high percentage of very good teaching in Years 1 and 2 which helps pupils to learn well and make good progress. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with good features in Years 5 and 6, where pupils' rate of learning is only satisfactory rather than good. This reflects the quality of the past teaching, with many staffing changes over the last few years. These changes have held back the pupils' learning and hindered their progress. They have a lot of ground to make up. However, this situation is improving, especially for Year 6 pupils. In the upper juniors pupils' learning slowed in a small minority of lessons where tasks were too easy or too hard and learning fell short of expectations in one lesson. Strengths in teaching were observed throughout the school and in several subjects, including English, mathematics, science, art and design, history and music. Basic skills are taught particularly well for the younger pupils, which is why they make such good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Effective support for the Resource Base pupils, from the teachers and assistants, helps them to be fully integrated and learn alongside their peers; this helps them to make good progress. Teaching for pupils who speak English as an additional language is good. They are well supported by their teachers and learning support assistants, which is why they make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is relevant to pupils' backgrounds and interests and is broad and balanced. However, statutory requirements are not met in information and communication technology. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory. There is very good equality of opportunity for all pupils to be included in all aspects of school life. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage children is not fully in place.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. There is effective provision for pupils with sensory impairments and other special educational needs. This is an area that is well managed and contributes well to both pupils' progress and the accepting attitude fostered in all pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are given the same curriculum opportunities as the others. They are fully included in all activities and they make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Personal development underpins much of the school's work, and the school strives to produce well-balanced pupils who are aware of the needs of others. Moral, social and cultural development is good. Music and art contribute to pupils' cultural development successfully.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A caring school that looks after its pupils well. Procedures for child protection, monitoring attendance and behaviour are of high quality. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress are good in

	English and mathematics but less developed in other subjects.
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Parents' views of the school are satisfactory overall. Links with them are much weaker than at the time of the previous inspection and some parents have lost confidence in the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Unsatisfactory. Due to uncertainties in the leadership and management because the headteacher has been absent, the acting management team do not have a clear enough vision of the way forward. Day-to-day management has been successful - the school has operated smoothly throughout. Senior managers and some subject co-ordinators do not have a strong enough monitoring role across the whole school. This limits their ability to push up standards successfully.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors' involvement is satisfactory overall, but they do not fulfil all their statutory duties in ensuring requirements for information and communication technology and the Foundation Stage are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. Priorities for development lack focus and not enough action is taken as a result of data collected on standards. The present capacity to improve is unsatisfactory although now that the headteacher situation is clearer, there are firm indications that a positive approach will prevail.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Financial planning and monitoring are appropriate. There is high quality administrative support. Specific grants are used effectively to help pupils with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language to make good progress.

The acting headteacher and governors soundly apply the principles of best value. Whilst governors are aware of the need to challenge what is going on in the school, their procedures for doing so, and taking effective action, lack some rigour. Adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources is satisfactory, although Reception children do not have access to an outside area that is resourced appropriately.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school is a happy caring one. Most children like coming to school. The attitudes and values promoted by the school are good. Teaching is good. The integration of pupils with special educational needs is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quantity and quality of homework. There is not enough information about the progress their child is making. Their partnership with the school. The uncertainty of the leadership and management of the school. More extra curricular activities.

Just over 25 per cent of the questionnaires issued, were returned, and six parents attended the pre-inspection meeting so views expressed are not necessarily representative of the majority of parents. The inspection team agrees with the positive views expressed by parents. The amount of homework given and extra curricular activities are appropriate. Aspects of leadership are uncertain and unsatisfactory. Information is presented acceptably, but many parents find it difficult to support their children's work at home and in school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. At the time of the previous inspection, standards in English, mathematics and science were reported to be in line with the national average at the end of Years 2 and 6. However, in the tests later that year, standards pupils achieved were below average in reading and mathematics in Year 2 and well below average in writing. At the end of Year 6 standards were below average in English, well below average in mathematics but in line with the average in science. Standards of attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6 in the National Curriculum tests in 2002 were well below average in English and science and in the lowest five per cent in mathematics. However, these results show satisfactory progress for most pupils and good progress for some pupils based on their actual prior attainment on entry to the school. Although, in science the proportion of pupils gaining the average Level 4¹ was higher than average, too few pupils gained the higher Level 5, so overall standards were still well below average. In English and mathematics too few pupils managed to gain the average and higher levels. Targets that were set two years previously were not met in either subject. This is partly due to pupils moving in and out of the school, consequently the targets set did not relate to the same pupils.
2. Over the last five years, the trend in the core subjects has been broadly in line with average trends at the end of Year 6. This reflects some variability in year groups; in some classes pupils performed better than in others. A significant number of pupils moved into and out of the school and the composition of most junior classes differs year-on-year. The school was aware that the Year 6 class at the end of 2002 would not achieve highly given their prior attainment at seven. The class had more pupils with special educational needs for both learning and behaviour than is usual in the school. This is one of the reasons why very few pupils gained the higher levels in English, mathematics and science; consequently overall standards were well below average in the tests in July 2002. From the school's analysis, lower attaining pupils made good progress between Year 2 and Year 6. Average and higher attaining pupils made satisfactory progress. This is consistent with inspection findings of the quality of support given to lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Overall, those that were in the school in Year 2 made gains in learning that would be expected by Year 6. A high proportion of pupils, around 50 per cent, entered and left the school during Years 3 to 6. In addition, staffing disruptions, particularly at the top of the school, and the way in which the school has chosen to deploy its permanent and temporary staff, has contributed to some lack of challenge for older pupils. Currently, pupils in Years 3 and 4 are doing well, and are achieving standards that are generally above average in Year 3 and average in Year 4. Good work undertaken in Years 1 and 2 is extended and developed well, and pupils make good progress in Years 3 and 4.
3. Challenging targets, based on more accurate data, have been set for both English and mathematics for the present Year 6. Inspection evidence shows that it is realistic to expect better results given the prior attainment of the present group of pupils in Year 6. The class is more stable, which means pupils are more focused, prior attainment is higher and pupils are beginning to work harder. Their attitudes to work have improved recently but looking at past work, standards of presentation and handwriting were not good enough in both English and mathematics. However, the present teacher is very aware that pupils have much ground to cover and there are gaps in their knowledge

¹ In National Curriculum tests Level 2 is the average grade for pupils at the end of Year 2 and Level 3 is above average. Level 4 is the average grade for Year 6 and Level 5 is above average.

and understanding. This is partly due to a number of staffing changes. 'Catch up' programmes are to be implemented with support of the temporary management and special needs co-ordinator in the spring term. Evidence from lessons observed and more recent work shows better quality of work than earlier in the term, this is linked with higher expectations and good relationships between the teacher and pupils.

4. Standards of attainment for pupils in Year 2 in the National Curriculum tests in 2002, were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics because the percentage of pupils gaining Level 3 was much higher than average. The trend for higher achievement has risen since 2000. At the time of the 2002 tests, there was an able class and with high expectations and challenge from a stable experienced staff, pupils' achievement was particularly good. When compared to similar schools, they attained well above average in reading and mathematics and achieved very high results in writing. Teacher assessment in science shows pupils' attainment was not as high as in English and mathematics. The percentage of pupils gaining the average Level 2 was below average, however, those gaining the higher level was well above average. The baseline assessment information for these pupils shows they entered school below the national expectation, therefore they make very good progress in a short time, especially the younger children who have little time in the Foundation Stage.²
5. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in Year 2 are attaining average standards in speaking and listening, writing and mathematics. In reading and science, they are working at above average levels. Given the on-entry assessment data, the present Year 2 pupils are not likely to achieve such high results in writing and mathematics; nevertheless, they work hard and achieve well in all subjects as they benefit from good teaching. There are pupils who are likely to achieve the higher levels, but there are also a greater number who are working at lower levels than in the previous Year 2 class.
6. Pupils in Year 6 are working at below average levels in English, although standards in speaking and listening and reading are around average. One of the reasons reading is better is that there has been a good emphasis on using books for research and enquiry skills, which was noted as a weakness in the last inspection. In addition pupils have dedicated library sessions and learn library skills in a progressive manner in a well-stocked and organised library. However, standards of writing are below average in presentation, handwriting, spelling and use of adventurous vocabulary. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length, as at the time of the last inspection, and put into practise skills learnt either in literacy lessons or in other subjects. There are, however, a few pupils who are achieving above average standards. Standards in mathematics and science are below average. A common reason is that in both subjects higher attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6 are not moved on quickly enough in the lesson to more challenging work, which has been planned at the right levels.
7. When children start in the Reception their attainment is generally below average. Over the last few years, entry assessment indicates that fewer able children enter the school with higher attainment and there are now more with below average attainment. At the time of the inspection, Reception children had not started at the school. Evidence from the previous year's work and observing pupils in Year 1, indicate most achieve the Early Learning Goals³, although a few do not. They achieve particularly well in communication, language and literacy and mathematics as the teachers put a very high focus on these subjects and have consistent strategies throughout the Reception,

² Children in the Reception year are in the Foundation Stage.

³The Foundation Stage curriculum is based on the Early Learning Goals which cover communication, literacy and learning, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development.

Years 1 and 2. Children achieve well through Reception, Years 1 and 2 and make good progress as evident in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2. Following a good start and where teaching is stable and effective, pupils in Years 3 and 4 continue to achieve well and make good progress. However, progress slows in Years 5 and 6 and, from the evidence in past work since September, is unsatisfactory over time.

8. Overall, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They have good support in lessons, are well monitored and the data indicate that there is good progress within key areas, such as mathematics and literacy over a year and from year to year. There is also good progress made with regard to both the academic and social targets identified within individual education plans. Pupils from ethnic minority groups speak and write English with competence and achieve similar standards to their peers. Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve standards that are at the same levels as their classmates. Their starting points are lower when they join the Reception class, but they make good progress overall throughout the Foundation Stage and Years 1 to 4. Progress slows in Years 5 and 6 although these older pupils are now starting to move forward positively, especially in Year 6.
9. The school analyses pupils' achievements in relation to higher attainment, special needs, gender and ethnicity. It takes action if any differences are identified, for example, between boys and girls. A range of additional support is in place, which is particularly effective for the lower attaining pupils who make good progress. However, higher attaining pupils only make satisfactory progress and not enough is being done to make sure they, particularly older pupils, achieve their full potential. This is reflected in the lack of higher achievement in the National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 6. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds do not perform any differently from the overall attainment in the school. They make similar progress to the rest of the school.
10. The school has managed to combine rising standards in Years 1 to 4 with a satisfactory curriculum offering a wide range of interesting opportunities for learning. In the foundation subjects, standards are average for pupils in Year 2 in all subjects with the exception of design and technology and physical education where they are above that expected. In Years 3 to 6, overall standards are in line with expectations with the exception of information and communication technology (ICT) where standards are below average. This is because there are gaps in the pupils' knowledge and understanding. In music, overall standards are average, but the quality of singing is above expectations due to good teaching from an enthusiastic specialist.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good. Their response to the opportunities provided for their personal development and relationships between each other and with adults are very good. This is not quite as strong a picture as when the school was inspected in 1998. At that time, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were judged to be very good. Relationships and personal development have improved from good to very good, with attention having been paid to the weakness identified at that time in respect of the opportunities provided to pupils to express their own views.
12. Throughout the school the pupils are polite, friendly and well behaved. They are confident and relate easily with adults, although never in a disrespectful way. They are keen to come to school and show an above average level of interest in whatever they are doing. They listen carefully and courteously to teachers, almost all being very ready to participate in question and answer sessions, doing so in a sensible and mature way.

13. They work well together and individually, readily taking turns and showing a willingness to apply themselves to whatever task is presented to them. This is particularly noticeable when teaching is stimulating and pupils are swept along with the excitement of the lessons such as when in a Year 2 religious education lesson they sit in candle-lit semi-darkness to discuss the Diwali Festival of Light and compare it with Christian and other celebrations.
14. There is a keenness to collect rewards for good behaviour and effort. All the pupils readily involve themselves in charitable activities showing recognition of the need to help those less fortunate than themselves. Parents rightly feel that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible individuals. The very positive attitudes displayed by the pupils help their learning, although there are rare incidents when in Year 5 they lose focus because teaching does not keep them interested in the subject.
15. There is an ethos of good behaviour, and an orderly and constructive atmosphere throughout the school, that encourages learning to take place. The pupils respond well to the high standards of behaviour expected. Boys and girls of all ages and backgrounds get on well with each other, showing respect for the feelings of others. Break times are pleasant social occasions when the pupils behave well, playing together without any sign of bullying or other anti-social behaviour. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well behaved; they enjoy their activities and try hard. This helps them to learn well and get on with all other children.
16. The standard of pupils' behaviour in classrooms, in the playground, when moving about the school, and when eating their lunch, is usually good and often very good. No unsatisfactory behaviour, other than of a minor nature responding to some weaker teaching of older juniors, was observed during the inspection and nothing was seen to suggest that when misbehaviour does occur that it is oppressive, or that there is vindictive bullying or sexism within the school. Last school year there was one fixed-term exclusion, one more than for the equivalent period prior to the previous inspection. The brief exclusion reflected the school's determination to ensure that its standards are upheld for the benefit of the majority
17. Pupils' personal development is very good. There is social inclusion within the school and harmonious relationships exist throughout the school community. All the pupils are sensitive to the needs of each other. They embrace those less able than themselves especially those with visual and hearing problems, in a mutually rewarding partnership that is a joy to see. In assemblies, and elsewhere, many mainstream pupils happily use sign language to share experiences with their hearing impaired friends.
18. The pupils have opportunities to assume responsibility that steadily increase throughout their school life. They enjoy being monitors, helping with assemblies, being members of the school council and acting as 'guardian angels' looking after younger pupils at lunchtimes and break times. The pupils are diligent in fulfilling these responsibilities, which they undertake with enthusiasm. Members of the school council, even at this early stage in their term of office, are taking their responsibilities seriously. Their views, such as when they suggested having fruit in school or the removal of an old wooden shed to be replaced by a brick structure, are valued and have contributed to the school's provision for their learning.
19. Attendance levels are satisfactory. In recent years, they have been marginally below the national average for primary schools. The school has recently improved its attendance as a result of new strategies and has been successful in reducing the level of unauthorised absence, which was higher than average when the school was

inspected previously and is now similar to that achieved elsewhere. There is some lateness, but when it occurs it is of a minor nature and not disruptive to lessons.

20. There are very good relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils. The school is a harmonious place, with no racial tension. Pupils with visual or hearing impairment are very effectively integrated into the life of the school. Other pupils value having them in the class and a number of hearing pupils enjoy signing. The school 'Guardian Angel' system works well and helps promote the good relationships and behaviour. Pupils generally mix well together at breaks and dinner times.
21. Pupils at St. Michael's show respect for each other and this also relates to attitudes to pupils who experience difficulties with regard to learning or behaviour. The accepting and valuing attitude of the school means that everyone receives the attention they need and no one is penalised if an area of school life is difficult for them.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

22. Overall the quality of teaching in the school is good. This is similar to the previous inspection. Over three-quarters of lessons observed were good or better, and one third were very good. A very small percentage of lessons were unsatisfactory because tasks were either too easy or too hard. When this happened, pupils' progress slowed and they lost interest. A small minority of other lessons had weaker elements. These were not particularly significant and were linked to individual teachers and subjects.
23. Currently, there are no Reception children in school so no lessons were seen. Planning for this age group is generally based on National Curriculum subjects and not on the areas for learning⁴. This is unsatisfactory, but records and assessments show that the children made good progress last year from below average starting points when they joined the Reception class. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good and frequently very good. This is why the pupils in these years make such good progress and achieve well in the National Curriculum tests, at the end of Year 2. Teaching is good in Years 3 and 4, with strong features. Teachers know their subjects well, and they make sure that their pupils progress successfully.
24. Over recent times there have been significant staffing changes in the upper part of the school and these have affected the pupils' performance in Years 5 and 6. This has held back their progress in previous years. Staffing has stabilised and these older pupils are now starting to move forward positively, especially in Year 6. These pupils have much to do to make up for lost time, especially in English, mathematics and science, and there are gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Staff are aware of this, as are governors, and everyone is working hard to make sure that the pupils' progress speeds up. This is starting to happen, especially in Year 6. The school, with the backing of the governors, has ensured that all classes have good support from learning support assistants who help pupils in their learning and in a few cases with behaviour management. This strategy is proving successful and helping to keep pupils focused on their lessons and giving many much needed help and support to complete tasks in lessons. This is why pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
25. Teachers ensure that all pupils are included in every aspect of lessons. At the start of the lesson, most teachers target their questions very well so that pupils of different abilities are challenged. However, as the lesson moves on the higher attaining pupils only make satisfactory progress in some classes in the juniors. This is because they

⁴ The nationally recommended curriculum for Nursery and Reception children.

are taught the same work as the rest of the class before they move on to work that is more suited to their ability. This holds them back. Too few pupils are achieving the higher levels in Years 5 and 6. Generally girls and boys make similar contributions in lessons. Great care is taken to develop the language skills of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The teaching of pupils who are visually or hearing impaired is consistently very good. The staff liaise effectively and prepare unit pupils very well for work in the full class.

26. Pupils who have special educational needs are taught well. Classroom teachers take good notice of the individual education plans and, where appropriate, specialist advice from speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and behaviour support staff. There is good support provided by skilled and trained teaching assistants who show a high degree of sensitivity in supporting these pupils. There is good communication between all staff and assistants are well briefed with regard to what is planned and how to respond to individual pupils.
27. The teaching for pupils who speak English as an additional language is good. They are well supported by their teachers or the learning support assistants. Work is usually pitched at the right levels for them and their progress and attainments are securely charted in the main subjects. This is why they progress as well as their classmates.
28. The satisfactory implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, together with other recent developments in literacy and numeracy has given teachers better expertise in these subjects. Overall, teachers have good expertise in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. As a result, the majority of basic skills are taught well in lessons. This has not always been the case in Years 5 and 6, but more permanent teachers, as well as a stronger focus on pushing up standards, is starting to speed up pupils' progress as well as improve their standards.
29. Literacy is taught across the curriculum well in subjects such as design and technology and geography, which helps pupils to record their work effectively. Teachers successfully promote the use of numeracy skills to aid learning in other subjects, particularly in science and history to record information in charts and use timelines. However, in information and communication technology in classes other than Year 2, more attention needs to be given to improving pupils' ICT skills both within the subject and through other areas of the curriculum. This is a weakness.
30. An effective range of teaching methods is usually employed, being adapted well to both the requirements of different subjects and the needs of most of the pupils in the class. When teachers explain things clearly, and use effective demonstrations, pupils make good gains in learning. This was evident in a Year 3 gymnastics lesson and pupils made good progress in developing their skills. Teachers use effective questions to focus, check and extend pupils' thinking; they are skilled at maintaining a good pace in the lesson and virtually no time is wasted; this ensures that pupils remain focused and work hard. A good example was observed in Year 6, during a history lesson when learning facts about famous Victorians was made more challenging, as pupils put forward their views within an agreed time scale. The very good relationships seen in the school, together with the consistent application of the good behaviour management procedures, ensure that the organisation and control of pupils in lessons are usually good with pupils behaving well and focused on their lessons, which helps them to learn.
31. The quality of lesson planning is good overall. However, higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough because in some classes the tasks set are too easy or too hard. This was the case in the previous inspection and limited progress has been

made. A good feature of the planning is the clear learning intention about what is to be taught in each lesson. This is effectively shared with pupils, which helps them to be clear about their own learning. During the lesson and in the review at the end, teachers attempt to ensure that learning is consolidated by encouraging pupils to share their ideas. Good strategies are in place for pupils to gauge how well they have learnt a particular concept in lessons. Teachers use a 'thumbs up' for 'yes I now know how to do x' or 'I have learnt something new in this lesson' and appropriately 'thumbs down' if pupils are not clear about something. This helps the pupils to be fully involved in evaluating their own learning. It also helps staff to pitch pupils' future work accurately.

32. Pupils' past work had some variations in the way that it was marked, especially in Years 5 and 6 where it was unsatisfactory at times. This is because a number of different teachers were teaching these classes. Greater stability and permanence in the staffing arrangements for these year groups means that this issue is now being tackled. Good marking includes helpful comments, encourages improvement and acknowledges when this has been achieved. These were missing in some previous work. There are missed opportunities for pupils to be involved in working towards their own targets in English and mathematics. There is a good system in place, where target sheets that identify what needs to be learnt next are inserted in pupils' work books. However, there is very little reference to pupils' targets in marked work. In one or two instances, targets had been supposedly met, when they clearly had not. This needs to be tackled. Throughout the school homework is appropriately set to support pupils' learning particularly in English and mathematics.

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

33. The whole curriculum is relevant to pupils' backgrounds and interest. It is broad and balanced because the school has made sure that all subjects are valued. There are named governors for different subjects and governors regularly visit the school to monitor the delivery of the agreed curriculum. The school meets statutory requirements to teach the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education (RE) and subjects of the National Curriculum, except in information and communication technology (ICT). This is because some aspects are not fully in place. There are also gaps in the curriculum for the Foundation Stage children⁵. There is good provision for personal and social education, as there was at the time of the previous inspection. Sex and drugs education are appropriately planned within the curriculum. Collective acts of worship meet statutory requirements. Good policies and schemes support all subjects.
34. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage children (Reception) is not fully in place and there are gaps. There is no secure outdoor provision and no large equipment for them to use. (This is not identified in the school improvement plan). The planning for Reception children is based on the National Curriculum and not the early learning goals⁶. However, the provision within the classroom is good. There is an appropriate range of resources to support learning and the children made good progress last year. This is set to continue this year.
35. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided for Years 1 and 2 are good, and these cater well for pupils of all abilities, as they did at the time of the previous inspection. A particularly good feature is the way the curriculum is organised so that teachers use their specialisms to teach music, dance and library skills. The higher

⁵ Children in Nursery and Reception classes.

⁶ The nationally recommended curriculum for Reception aged children.

attaining pupils are well catered for and they make good progress. The curriculum provided for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory, which is not as good as it was at the time of the previous inspection. This is because there are gaps in ICT, as well as not fully catering for the higher attaining pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6.

36. Pupils with special educational needs receive the same broad curriculum as all pupils in the school. The school has made good use of funds for additional literacy and numeracy support. This has allowed additional support work to take place with considerable benefit so that the pupils make good progress overall. There are occasions where support work, particularly in the afternoon, cuts across other lessons. The school is aware of this and seeks to avoid pupils missing the same subject every week. This needs firming up to make sure that the balance of subjects is appropriate for each pupil.
37. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are securely in place and are helping to raise standards, although pupils in Years 5 and 6 have had mixed experiences because of staffing difficulties identified earlier in this report. A range of strategies is in place to target pupils who need more support and these are successful. These include separate reading sessions, additional oral mental maths sessions and regular use of optional assessment materials for English, mathematics and science. All of these are working well and are having a positive impact on the standards lower attaining pupils are achieving.
38. A strength of the curriculum is that all pupils are included in every aspect. This includes pupils with special educational needs, hearing and visually impaired pupils, pupils who speak English as an additional language and ethnic minority pupils. The curriculum is very well planned to ensure that pupils with hearing impairment and visual impairment have full access to the curriculum. There is close continuous liaison between unit staff and teachers throughout the school. This benefits both pupils in the unit and in the main school. Girls and boys are encouraged to participate fully in lessons. Occasionally pupils are withdrawn from lessons, but the school's arrangements ensure they do not miss out regularly on any aspect of the curriculum. The higher attaining pupils are not always challenged by their work, especially in Year 5 and 6. This is being tackled, especially in Year 6, with positive results beginning to show through.
39. There has been satisfactory progress with most of the curriculum weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection. Library skills are now taught systematically across the school. There are also more problem solving activities provided in mathematics. However, there are still weaknesses in the Foundation Stage curriculum.
40. The programme for personal, social and health education is good. The school successfully fulfils its own aim 'to give pupils the knowledge and skills to lead confident, healthy lives'. The school has achieved the 'Healthy Schools' bronze award and is currently working toward a silver award. Sex education and issues arising from drug misuse are taught within the science curriculum and as they arise. A range of special days and events such as 'you're okay, I'm okay' and 'Red nose' day, are all aimed at promoting pupils' self esteem. A school council enables pupils to participate fully in issues that are of particular interest to them. The school 'guardian angel' system works well and helps promote the good relationships between pupils of different ages. It contributes significantly towards the pupils' good behaviour at break times. The school's underlying atmosphere of care and concern for every individual makes a powerful contribution to the personal and social development of its pupils.

41. The school broadens pupils' learning experiences through a range of additional experiences. There are planned trips to support most areas of the curriculum and regular use is made of visitors to enrich subjects. Pupils are involved in local music and sports events. Specialist music tuition is available. Care is taken to include boys and girls in all activities provided. Older pupils have a residential experience. However, there are fewer clubs than many schools provide for pupils to participate in. (This is less than at the time of the previous inspection, but nevertheless satisfactory). A significant minority of parents who returned the questionnaire suggest that the school does not provide an interesting range of learning activities.
42. The school has satisfactory links with the wider community as well as its partner institutions. Regular community visitors such as the school nurse, police officer and charity representatives add interest to the planned curriculum. There are a number of reading volunteers and some governors' help on a regular basis. There are very few parent volunteers in school. The school has a business link with a local supermarket who sponsor the attendance challenge. Pupils are very keen to win and participate enthusiastically.
43. The school's provision for the personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good, as it was at last inspection. Everyone is included in this aspect of the school's day-to-day life. Personal development underpins much of the school's work, and the school strives to produce well-balanced pupils who are aware of the needs of others. It is largely successful.
44. Spiritual development has improved since the last inspection, and the pupils now have a time for quiet reflection and prayer. This gives them the opportunity to consider their own ideas and thoughts, as well as reflecting on God's wider world outside their home and school communities. Pupils' work is displayed attractively in classrooms and in the shared areas, where it is valued, boosting the pupils' self-esteem as well as belief in their own capabilities. The well-planned daily act of collective worship fully meets statutory requirements. Pupils are encouraged to reflect upon their own and others' experiences and to explore common values, as in the class assembly on Remembrance Day. Whenever possible, teachers draw pupils' attention to the wonders of nature. In religious education lessons, they successfully develop an understanding of the differing beliefs of the major world religions.
45. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. The school's behaviour policy is understood by everyone. Adults and pupils work hard to achieve the good standards of behaviour and they are successful. Pupils clearly distinguish between right and wrong. Assemblies and day-to-day activities deal with moral themes, and the school encourages pupils to take care of property and the environment.
46. The provision for pupils' social development is good. Pupils are encouraged to work and play together co-operatively, and they are successful. They undertake jobs in the school, raise money for charity and take an interest in senior citizens in the local community. The school uses visits in and around the local area, as well as visits further afield, to boost the pupils' social development well.
47. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils appreciate their own local culture by studying the locality and taking part in festivals such as Remembrance Day. In history, pupils have learnt about life in other times such as the Egyptians. The traditions of other faiths such as Islam are discussed and studied in religious education. Music and art and design contribute to pupils' cultural development

successfully. All of this enhances pupils' awareness of other cultures as well as their own.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

48. St Michael's Primary School is a caring school that meets its obligations for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare well. There is effective promotion of good behaviour and positive attitudes. Parents are happy with the attitudes and values promoted by the school. They feel that the school is a happy, caring one. There is a need for attention to be given to some aspects of its provision, which have been discussed with the school, and as a result the situation is not quite as strong as it was judged to be when the school was inspected previously. The support provided by the school enhances the quality of education provided by ensuring that pupils can work in a supportive and happy environment.
49. Child protection arrangements are very good. They meet statutory requirements. All members of staff understand their duty to be aware of the need to be attentive and they undertake this responsibility conscientiously and very effectively.
50. All members of the school community work together to provide surroundings in which the pupils feel well cared for and secure. Equality for all has a high profile in the school so that all the pupils are treated equally, and given proper support appropriate to individual need whatever their background or personal circumstances, although the provision for higher attaining pupils needs improving, especially in Year 5 and 6. As well as teaching staff, the school caretaker, administration staff and lunchtime controllers all relate very well to pupils. At lunchtimes, which are pleasant social occasions, pupils are well looked after. Year 6 pupils, in their role as 'guardian angels', contribute significantly to the orderly and positive atmosphere in the playground. This has a positive effect on behaviour, safety and pupils' personal development. Pupils readily turn to adults when they need help or advice knowing that they will be dealt with sensitively and well.
51. Governors take an active interest in health and safety matters. Together with school staff they undertake regular risk assessments, and have proper regard for the health and safety of the school community. Fire safety and first aid arrangements are well organised. The school's procedures for dealing with the very occasional accident are good and appropriate records are maintained. There are very good procedures for liaison with parents when necessary.
52. The school is trying hard to improve attendance and has very good procedures in place for this purpose. It recognises that absence from school reduces the quality of learning and continually stresses this to parents. Some success was achieved during the last school year as a result of the efforts of administration staff working closely with the school's education welfare officer. More recently, the introduction of a commercially sponsored 'Attendance Challenge' has captured the attention of pupils. They desperately seek to win the weekly best attendance title for their class. This is successful as attendance is now higher than average. The school has extensive measures to check attendance. There is no history of truancy. Procedures for recording absence and punctuality are rigorous. Registration routines are efficient in all classes and there is a prompt start to lessons. Records of attendance are properly maintained.
53. The procedures that are in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. They are well focused on the need to promote good behaviour and there is good definition of rewards and sanctions. These

are well understood and accepted by all the pupils. All permanent teachers have established positive relationships with the pupils in their classes. They have good strategies for dealing with the occasional instances of inappropriate behaviour and as a result there is no disruption to the flow of lessons. Sometimes teachers who are relatively new to the school have more difficulty in exercising control, but even then no unsatisfactory behaviour was observed during their lessons because the pupils respond well even when, as during a Year 5 science lesson, the teaching failed to challenge and interest them.

54. The school's arrangements for the monitoring and support of pupils' personal development are in line with those expected. A variety of strategies successfully promote pupils' personal development. Formal arrangements for monitoring, including teacher records and summaries in the pupils' annual reports are routine. Informal monitoring that benefits from teachers' knowledge of the pupils as individuals, is good.
55. The school's underlying atmosphere of care and concern for each pupil makes a powerful contribution to the personal and social development of all its pupils. The school complies with legislation relating to different groups, including admissions procedures, special needs, equal opportunities and disability. There are secure procedures for assessing pupil's attainment and progress in English and mathematics, but pupils' individual targets are not always referred to by teachers when marking pupils work. This is a weakness.
56. The provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is good. Teaching and non-teaching staff give good support, and pupils' progress and attainment are recorded regularly in the main subjects but not the others. Standards in the core subjects are tracked effectively so that any gaps can be quickly tackled.
57. Assessment arrangements were judged to be very good at the last inspection. The assessment systems remain secure, with a detailed analysis of all the assessment information that is available to the school. However, limited use is made of all this assessment information. Pupils' future learning plans are not always based on accurate and up-to-date information, resulting in the higher attaining pupils not being challenged and extended by their work, especially in Years 5 and 6. Pupils' personal development is tracked informally, and this can be effective in many classes. It is less effective where there are no written records and there are changes in the staff.
58. Teachers are good at checking out pupils' progress, knowledge and understanding on a day-to-day basis. They do this by asking questions, scrutinising work and marking it, talking to pupils and giving them extra support. What is missing are consistent systems that are used by everyone to track and monitor pupils' progress and attainment in the non-core subjects of the curriculum. Work is underway to tackle this but there is some way to go before effective systems are in place. Without this it is difficult for senior managers to know where the school's strengths and weaknesses are. It also makes it difficult for staff to draw all the information together about a particular pupil to pass on to parents or the next teacher.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

59. The school's links with its parents are satisfactory, but the impact of parents' involvement in the work of the school continues to be unsatisfactory as previously. When the school was inspected in 1998 no overall judgement was made, however, some strong features about the school's relationship with its parents were reported. It was also noted that the school had yet to secure satisfactory levels of parental

involvement in all aspects of school life. This remains the same. The overall position is less secure now although it remains a satisfactory one. A small group of parents help regularly in school, fund raising events are supported, and there is a valued parents' association.

60. Fifty-one pre-inspection questionnaires, representing just over 25 per cent of those issued, were returned, and six parents attended the pre-inspection meeting, so views expressed are not necessarily representative of the majority of parents. However, on the evidence available the school appears to have lost the confidence of some of its parents since the previous inspection. A mixed picture is presented with questionnaire responses being much less positive than at the time of the previous inspection. No aspect of what the school does satisfies more than 87 per cent of parents and yet the small number of parents attending the parents' meeting expressed very positive views about how the school provides for their children. Overall, the views of parents are less positive than frequently found in similar schools with a number that have wide ranging concerns. The school recognises that more needs to be done to embrace all parents fully and is trying hard to reach out to them.
61. Home school links are supported by a Home-School-Pupils' Agreement that provides for commitment by all to the improvement of standards. The quality of information provided formally by the school is satisfactory. Newsletters and termly topic sheets, together with a variety of liaison activities held throughout the year, keep parents informed about school activities. Parents are welcome to visit the school at any time. The school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents provide parents with all the information to which parents are entitled, although in a somewhat formal way with missed opportunities to celebrate successes in a stimulating way that is attractive to parents.
62. Parents are provided with regular opportunities to be informed of their children's progress throughout the year and annually through a written report. There is considerable variation in the quality of the reports. Those for the children in the Foundation Stage class are unsatisfactory. They report national curriculum subjects rather than areas of learning, as they should. Elsewhere, throughout the school, there are variations. There is some good reporting of what pupils have done and can do, but there is a general weakness in providing parents with an indication of how their children are performing in comparison with what they should be doing except at the end of each key stage. Better use could be made of target setting on reports, and this has not improved since the last inspection. A general comments section is well used by most teachers, clearly indicating non-academic strengths and weaknesses. Observations are generally objective, providing a good record of personal development.
63. Parents are kept closely informed if their children have special educational needs. The special needs co-ordinator ensures that she is always available at parents' evenings to bring parents up to date, to review individual plans and exchange observations about individual pupils. Although the occasional parent has questioned the quality of the support work carried out, there is every indication that the special needs co-ordinator's commitment, together with the additional teaching assistant time, provide good additional support.
64. Parents of children who speak English as an additional language are involved in their children's education and this helps the children to be well motivated. Parents attend review meetings, when these are held, and they regularly attend open evenings and school functions.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

65. The school is presently in a state of transition. After several bouts of illness, including during the previous inspection as well as the present one, the headteacher has very recently taken retirement on the grounds of ill-health. The deputy headteacher, who normally teaches in Year 6, has been out of the classroom since May of this year to carry out her duties as acting headteacher. The Year 6 class is being taken by a temporary teacher, and two other temporary teachers job share teaching to the Year 5 class whose teacher is presently absent on maternity leave.
66. Uncertainty about the well-being of the headteacher has created difficulties in firming up the school's future plans. The acting headteacher has handled the preparation for the inspection conscientiously. She is soundly supported by an acting senior management team. The group have successfully maintained the smooth running of the school on a day-to day basis, and they have managed this soundly. The acting senior management team has given limited strategic direction to the school during the absence of the headteacher. This is because of the way in which responsibilities have been delegated and the uncertainty over her possible return. In this situation the leadership of the school is unsatisfactory. The result is that the school's ability to maintain improvements and to raise standards falls short of expectations and is unsatisfactory. At the last inspection, the leadership and management were judged to be very good. This is no longer the case.
67. When previously inspected, the school's aims and values were clear and reflected throughout its life and work. The ethos was impressively strong. Only two key issues were identified, namely the need to introduce a programme of extended writing and information retrieval skills and enquiry work for pupils in Years 3 to 6 and improve the overall attendance at the school. There has been satisfactory progress in providing opportunities for information retrieval skills, but more limited opportunities for writing at length based upon pupils' own thoughts, feelings and experiences. Attendance has improved, especially in a significant reduction in the level of unauthorised absence. However, in meeting its aims to promote the highest potential for all pupils, the picture is not as strong as it was. It is unsatisfactory as the higher attaining pupils are not doing as well as they could, especially in Years 5 and 6.
68. Staffing changes have caused a number of disruptions to pupils' learning. These are now being tackled more appropriately, and older pupils are starting to make gains in their learning. An appropriate range of responsibilities has been delegated to all teachers, including those with Resource Base responsibilities and those on temporary contracts. Teachers new to the school are well supported by the school's induction procedures ensuring that they rapidly settle into school routines. Job descriptions, supported by the school's arrangements for appraisal and performance management, clearly define responsibilities that are shouldered happily and often with considerable confidence, although the delegation of responsibilities to those on relatively short-term contracts is not ideal.
69. Established subject co-ordinators have had opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching in their subjects. They contribute to subject documentation and help to improve their colleagues' skills, but they need to work across the whole school more effectively if they are to truly influence standards and enhance pupils' progress. The subject co-ordinators have an increasingly clear view of the standards being achieved and what improvement is needed. They contribute to the school development plan by evaluating recent progress in their subjects, and this helps to move the school forward.

70. The special needs co-ordinator has always provided highly skilled and committed advice and support for pupils with special educational needs and their families. The new co-ordinator is following in the tradition and has good plans for the maintenance and development of special needs provision. The management of teaching assistants, the planning and review procedures and links with outside agencies, such as child health and speech and language therapy are all facets of an efficient and effective management structure. The special needs co-ordinator is a member of the senior management team and this is appropriate. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs is new to the post, but her predecessor showed a high level of involvement and commitment. Overall, staffing, accommodation and resources are good for this aspect of the school's work. The nature of pupils' individual education plans indicates that not enough training has taken place with regard to the development of speech and language skills.
71. The work of pupils who speak English as an additional language is overseen by their teachers and the acting headteacher. Progress and attainment are checked out at regular intervals, and external support services are brought in to help where they are needed. This system works well in ensuring that no-one slips through the net.
72. Governors are properly involved in the work of the school both as members of various committees and as individuals properly undertaking their responsibilities. Governors liaise appropriately with the school both formally and informally to offer support and to monitor developments in provision and standards. They undertake their duties in a satisfactory way. Their involvement in the strategic development of the school, in particular their awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, though satisfactory, is not as strong as when the school was inspected previously. There is insufficient rigour in how they monitor and challenge what the school does, and how they ensure that statutory requirements are met. It is unsatisfactory that they have allowed deficiencies in the delivery of the information and communication technology curriculum and the Foundation Stage provision to take place. Governors have been properly informed of school activities and achievements by the acting headteacher, formally through headteacher's reports and informally through meetings and discussion. They are proud of the school, showing an active interest in all aspects of its work.
73. The school's priorities for development and the action taken to meet its targets are unsatisfactory. As defined in the school's improvement plan, they address much of what is necessary in respect of the school's identified development targets but there are areas in need of development, such as the provision for children in the Foundation Stage, that are not identified. There is not enough focus on raising standards and the school improvement plan is not monitored rigorously enough. This holds back future developments.
74. The school has satisfactory procedures for ensuring that the financial resources available to it properly support the educational needs of its pupils. There is a clear cycle of financial planning, linked to the school's improvement plan, and the monitoring of expenditure is secure. Governors always consider what gives the best value for the school before making financial decisions. Funds are higher than in many other schools, and this is after making allowance for the Sensory Resource Bases. When the children join St Michael's, in the reception class, their standards are below average. They make good progress, and frequently very good progress, so that by the end of Year 2 their standards are well above average. Good progress is maintained in Years 3 and 4, despite a number of pupils joining or leaving the school. Standards in Years 5 and 6 have been significantly lower in recent times, mainly due to the staffing difficulties

outlined earlier in this report, and an increasing number of pupils with special educational needs. Staffing issues have been tackled, and a more stable staffing situation means that improvements in pupils' attainment are starting to show, especially in Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as do the pupils in the learning Resource Bases. The school is judged to give satisfactory value for money.

75. Significant funds have been held in reserve. These are too high and are being reduced by prudent planning. Governors have a planned strategy for releasing funds so that standards can be pushed up, especially in Years 3 to 6. A number of initiatives are taking place, and these are all in line with the school improvement plan. Governors have proper regard for the use of accumulated financial reserves. There is secure contingency planning in place to ensure that the school's finances will be sufficient to ensure the continuation of its present strategies.
76. The school's overall administration arrangements, and the management and day-to-day control of its finances, are very good. The office staff are a significant strength. They are very well organised, competent and committed. They work closely together making a significant contribution to the smooth running of the daily life of the school community. The school office is well equipped with appropriate use being made of new technology here and elsewhere in support of the work of the school. There is some very good use made of the information available from the school's computerised management system, such as that used to monitor attendance. The recommendations made as a result of the school's most recent audit have all been implemented.
77. Governors and the acting senior team use a range of statistical information to assess the school's performance compared with similar schools and all schools nationally. However, better use could be made of this information to enable the senior managers be more specific about what needs to be done if the school is to improve. Whilst governors are aware of the need to challenge what is going on in the school their procedures for doing so, and taking effective action, lack some rigour so that the governors' role as a critical friend is not fully developed.
78. The use of the specific funds element of the school's finances, and other additional funding, is well focused. It has a positive impact on the quality of learning provision for the pupils who are supported. The school satisfactorily accesses a range of additional money to support the needs of different pupils. For example, there is local education authority support for pupils who speak English as an additional language and for pupils who belong to travelling families. The school provides a range of additional support for its lower attaining pupils. As a result, most make good progress. The school monitors and evaluates its performance. It has identified the need to raise standards in Year 5 and 6, and has made a start by tackling the staffing issues. Standards are starting to move upwards in Year 6 particularly.
79. There are sufficient, suitably qualified staff to meet the requirements of the curriculum. However, the school has had significant difficulties in appointing and retaining staff over the last few years. This is an area of concern that the governors are tackling because standards fall short of expectations where the pupils have had a number of teachers in a relatively short time. The staff's training needs are successfully linked to the priorities on the school improvement plan, which is good.
80. Learning support staff are used very well to support the learning of lower attaining pupils, those with special educational needs, and those who have English as an

additional language. Teachers and their assistants make effective teams, which contribute well to improving standards for the pupils in their care. Staff involved with administration, lunch-time supervision, managing the school site and cleaning duties, make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school.

81. The accommodation is spacious and airy, but there are weaknesses in that the school has no area where the pupils can work together with computers as a whole class or even half a class. One of the current resource rooms could be changed into an information and communication technology suite, with very little effort. This would enable the pupils' ICT skills to be taught more effectively than they are at present. The rest of the accommodation is spacious, with the exception of the rooms used for the older pupils, which are cramped when the pupils are working practically. The youngest children do not have a suitable area to work and play outside, and this holds back their learning. The requirements for the Foundation Stage curriculum are not met fully because of this. The grounds are well kept and used for sports and games. This helps to push up standards.
82. Learning resources are now better than they were at the last inspection, and they are now good. Funds have been used wisely to target gaps. However, the lack of a computing suite holds back the pupils' progress as outlined above. There is a good range of fiction and non-fiction books. Resources for pupils with special educational needs are good. Pupils with English as an additional language share the resources in their class successfully, and their learning is good overall.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

83. In order to improve standards, the acting management team, governors and staff should:

- (1) Ensure that senior staff and governors provide the school with a clear educational direction by:

- clarifying the roles and responsibilities of senior staff, and checking that they are implemented effectively;
- making better use of all the data available to the school to improve its overall performance; and
- ensuring that curriculum requirements are met in ICT and in the Foundation Stage.

Paragraphs: 66, 67, 69, 72, 73 and 77.

- (2) Raise the standards pupils achieve in English, mathematics and science Years 5 and 6 by;

Raising standards in English by:

- ensuring pupils have sufficient experience of writing in different forms, at length, including independent, creative writing;
- encouraging pupils to organise their writing effectively with an audience in mind;
- emphasising the importance of correct spelling, taking greater care of handwriting and presentation, including writing in other subjects other than English;
- extending the use of information and communication technology in literacy lessons; and
- ensuring higher attaining pupils are given more challenging work that is better suited to their prior attainment.

Paragraphs: 6 – 9, 24, 25, 31, 35, 38, 50, 96, 97, 104, 106 and 107.

Raising standards in mathematics by:

- ensuring that higher attaining pupils have work that fully extends and challenges them;
- planning that computers are used regularly to help pupils with their learning; and
- taking steps to ensure the pace of lessons is brisker and pupils complete more work in lessons.

Paragraphs: 6 – 9, 24, 25, 31, 35, 38, 50, 108, 111, 114 and 115.

Raise standards in science by:

- ensuring that work is planned at the right level so that higher attaining pupils are challenged more;
- taking steps to ensure the pace in some lessons is brisker;
- ensuring that pupils' suggestions and ideas are developed so they remain interested in their lessons; and
- enabling pupils to have the skills to set out the planning and recording of their investigations.

Paragraphs: 6 – 9, 24, 25, 31, 35, 38, 50, 116 and 119 – 122.

(3) Raise standards in Years 3 to 6 and improve the provision made for ICT by:

- ensuring that all elements of the ICT curriculum is fully implemented;
- ensuring pupils' skills are taught in a progressive manner;
- planning how pupils' ICT skills can be developed through work in other subjects;
- developing assessment procedures to track pupils' progress more effectively;
- ensuring teachers have sufficient training opportunities to use ICT more effectively and with confidence; and
- taking steps to ensure that maximum use is made of ICT equipment.

Paragraphs: 10, 29, 33, 35, 81, 82, 106, 123, 125, 130, 138, 145, 147, 148, 154 and 169.

(4) Improve the Foundation Stage curriculum by:

- using the curriculum guidance for Reception aged children as a basis for planning and assessing their work, both indoors and outdoors;
- making sure that children's progress is reported in a suitable way to their parents; and
- improving the information that is available to parents before their children start school so that they know about the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Paragraphs: 33, 34, 39, 62, 73, 81, 93 and 94.

In addition a minor issue needs to be addressed:

Put in place whole school systems for assessing pupils' progress in science and the foundation subjects effectively.

Paragraphs: 56 – 58, 122, 126, 132 and 138.

Visual and Deaf Resource Bases

84. This aspect of the school's work was seen as a strength in the previous report. This is still the case. Both Resource Bases provide a high quality of teaching and this contributes to good progress for all of the pupils they support. In addition it creates a good model of inclusive practice which benefits all pupils.
85. Currently, the Visual Resource Base supports five pupils. This is the number for which it is funded. The Deaf Resource Base supports two Year 6 pupils, which is a low number and one that will be even lower if no other pupils with hearing impairment enter the school. Each of these seven pupils has a statement of special educational needs. The requirements identified within the statements are well met and parents recognise the high standard of support provided by all staff for pupils with sensory impairments.
86. The attainments of pupils within both Resource Bases cover a wide range. All pupils make good progress both in terms of National Curriculum targets and also with respect to those objectives identified within good individual education plans. This represents good personal, social and academic progress. For those pupils experiencing visual impairment, there is also good progress with regard to the use of Braille, touch-typing and mobility skills. Pupils who are deaf progress well in their use of both spoken English and in the development of signing.
87. The fact that St. Michael's has the two Resource Bases, but includes the pupils totally within the classes means that all pupils show a full and natural acceptance of each other. Staff, pupils and parents have very positive attitudes to equality of opportunity and celebrate children for who they are, rather than what they achieve or find difficult. It was noticeable to the inspection team that all pupils benefited from this and very positive attitudes were shown by all pupils to both adults and fellow pupils. In addition, pupils enjoy developing, for example, their own signing skills, which adds to their own maturity and is good preparation for the adult world.
88. Pupils from the Resource Bases are taught well. The specialist teachers provide skilled support and adapted materials to assist access to the full curriculum. In addition, class teachers have developed very effective and sensitive ways of supporting Resource Base pupils within class lessons. A combination of good planning, strong teamwork and imagination ensures that these pupils receive the same opportunities as every other pupil. Thus, in a very good Year 2 dance lesson, the class includes one pupil who has a visual impairment. Although a teaching assistant is available to support him, the pupil takes a full and free part in the lesson, mimicking the movements of polar bears and penguins, developing a short routine and linking movements and gestures to music. No distinction is made between pupils apart from the individual attention each receives during the lesson. Similarly, in a very good Year 6 music lesson, the class builds up a part song based on the street cries of London. Within the group are two pupils who are deaf and use British Sign Language. Not only are these two pupils fully involved and respond with the same ability and enthusiasm as the other pupils, but the majority of the class naturally sign when singing and benefit greatly from the presence of a highly skilled interpreter.
89. These two examples exemplify what is very good practice for a fully inclusive curriculum. There is no distinction made between the curriculum received by hearing and sighted pupils and those pupils linked to the Resource Bases. In addition to the full curriculum, Resource Base pupils also receive support to prepare for and back up

work carried out in class. At the end of the morning, for instance, two pupils come to the Deaf Resource Base and receive a 'top up' that assists them in completing work carried out in classrooms. The Visual Resource Base has highly trained and very experienced teaching assistants who spend a significant amount of time preparing materials for classroom activities. Their skills, attitudes and commitment are exemplary. Similarly, the sign communicator within the Deaf Resource Base is a highly skilled practitioner, but combines this with high levels of expertise as a teaching assistant.

90. Both teacher and learning support assistants provide close and effective links with parents. This assists in the happiness and progress of pupils with sensory impairments. The school sets up and monitors individual education plans with the full involvement and support of families. The annual review procedures and parent consultations are very good. There is some participation on the part of pupils in their own target setting and reviews, but this is an area that still has some way to go.
91. Both Resource Bases are very well managed. The two specialist teachers are highly committed and set a good example in terms both of their teaching and their curriculum planning skills. They work well with all other staff in the school and provide good advice and support for teachers and teaching assistants alike. There is also a good partnership between the Resource Base teachers and the finance officer. Each Resource Base has its own budget and the procedures by which money is spent and accounted for is a model of its kind. The accommodation within which the two Resource Bases are sited is good, well resourced and efficiently used. Each of the teaching assistants has received good training in the past. However, the training for Braille has not been planned or financed as effectively as it might have been by the school and there is no regular interview process whereby assistants can identify clearly what their future professional needs might be.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	44
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	16	19	8	1	0	0
Percentage	0	36	43	18	2	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	Y1 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	186
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	30

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y1 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	59

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	10	19	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	10	10
	Girls	16	17	18
	Total	26	27	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (82)	93 (82)	97 (88)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	10	9
	Girls	16	18	16
	Total	26	28	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (85)	97 (82)	86 (79)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	22	10	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	7	19
	Girls	7	4	7
	Total	15	11	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	47 (68)	34 (62)	81 (94)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	10	18
	Girls	6	5	8
	Total	18	15	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	56 (74)	47 (65)	81 (97)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	140	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	14	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	7	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	5	1	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y1 – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.6
Average class size	26.6

Education support staff: Y1 – Y7

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	228

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	639964
Total expenditure	607749
Expenditure per pupil	3149
Balance brought forward from previous year	133455
Balance carried forward to next year	165670

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	186
Number of questionnaires returned	51

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	31	10	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	37	39	10	10	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	55	6	6	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	55	18	2	0
The teaching is good.	37	45	10	4	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	35	20	16	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	37	10	6	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	39	6	6	2
The school works closely with parents.	22	45	14	16	4
The school is well led and managed.	27	35	20	12	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	49	8	8	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	10	27	16	27	20

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

92. The school admits children into the Year 1/Reception class in January. Consequently, at the time of the inspection there were no Reception children in school. Over the last few years, attainment at the start of reception year has declined. It is generally below that expected for children of their age – this is based on entry assessment data. The number of children with poorer communication, language and literacy skills and more limited personal, social and emotional development has increased. Conversely the number with higher attainment has decreased. Assessment data is used satisfactorily to group children for their work in English and mathematics. There is a high focus on English and mathematics in the school in Reception, Years 1 and 2. Children made good progress during Reception in most areas of learning. It is evident that particularly good attention is paid to children's personal, social and emotional development as they are independent, interested pupils in Year 1, with good attitudes to learning. This also includes pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, as they make similar progress to other children of the same age.
93. There are satisfactory links with parents prior to the children entering the Reception class. There is detailed information about school routines and how they can help their child prior to entry. However, the curriculum information is about the work of pupils within the National Curriculum and not that of the Foundation Stage. This is a weakness in the school's arrangements. At the end of the Reception year, children's progress was reported to parents, but not under areas of learning as recommended in the Foundation Stage, but as separate National Curriculum subjects. This is unsatisfactory and needs reviewing.
94. From observations of the present youngest pupils, it would appear that they were well prepared to start working in Year 1. However, planning for children in the Foundation Stage is generally planned under National Curriculum subjects rather than areas of learning. In addition, no provision or resources are identified for children to work and play outside.

ENGLISH

95. The previous report indicated that standards in English were not significantly different from the national average in English. However, the test results later that year were below average in reading and well below average in writing at the end of Year 2 and below average at the end of Year 6. The school has made good progress in raising standards in English by the end of Year 2, but not significantly for pupils in Year 6.
96. Standards are around average in Year 2 with higher attainment in reading. In the present Year 6 class, results are likely to be better than in 2002 given the pupils now have stable teaching, following disruption at the beginning of the term. There are some variations within year groups regarding the progress pupils make. Overall, standards are below average at the end of Years 5 and 6 because progress has been unsatisfactory over time, although the rate of progress is now improving in Year 6. In reading and speaking and listening they are around average but much lower in writing. This is because there is very little higher attainment because not enough has been expected from these pupils and work is not always challenging enough, particularly for the higher attaining pupils. Currently pupils in Year 3 achieve standards that are generally above average and those in Year 4 are achieving average standards.

97. Pupils make good progress over time, due to good teaching. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress from below average attainment when they enter the school. Work is then successfully extended and built on in Years 3 and 4, which helps these pupils make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and their progress reflects this. Pupils from ethnic minorities make similar progress to others but those who speak English as an additional language get good support and make good progress from a lower starting point.
98. Standards of speaking and listening throughout the school are satisfactory, so that by seven and 11 years of age, pupils achieve the national average. Seven-year-olds read well and standards are generally above average; by the time pupils are 11, standards in reading are around average. Standards of writing, in Year 2, are broadly average. This is not so high as in 2002 because there are more pupils with special educational needs in the year and fewer higher attaining pupils likely to attain the higher Level 3 in the National Curriculum tests. Writing in Year 6 is below average, with too few pupils likely to gain the higher Level 5. Work is not sufficiently well matched to pupils' prior ability and does not extend the higher attaining pupils. Where pupils carry out similar tasks, lower attaining pupils are effectively supported in their learning by teaching assistants. This ensures that these pupils, as well as pupils who speak English as an additional language, are well challenged as evident in a good rate of learning. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
99. Teachers provide pupils with good opportunities for speaking and listening. Pupils ask and answer questions, listen and respond to others and present their own ideas and opinions clearly. This was illustrated in an art and design lesson when Year 6 pupils promoted the contributions of a notable Victorian. High expectations and effective discipline ensured pupils listened attentively and built on each other's responses whilst waiting for their turn to speak. Some good opportunities for role-play are offered to enhance speaking and listening skills, as in Year 4 when pupils asked those in role about the death of Tutankhamun. Teachers encourage pupils to use the correct terminology, not only in literacy, but in other subjects as well, as in a Year 1/2 lesson, when pupils used mathematical vocabulary well when they talked about what they had learnt about symmetry and the properties of different shapes. From the start of school, speaking and listening are promoted well with a good emphasis on explaining their work.
100. Standards in reading are above average in Year 2 and around average in Year 6. By seven years of age many pupils read accurately and fluently and by 11, are becoming confident readers. There is a good emphasis on reading and this enables pupils to explore and share books with enthusiasm. In the infants, younger pupils talk readily about illustrations, recall the main points of the story and describe the actions of characters with clarity. In infant classes basic reading skills are developed well, as pupils link letters with sounds and recall words by sight. This is enforced well, as in a Year 1 lesson when younger pupils are encouraged to join in with repeating patterns in songs such as 'Old MacDonald'. This they do with enjoyment, but it also helps them to remember sounds and letters associated with animals. In Year 1, older pupils make good progress, with more confident readers starting to self-correct their reading. Learning moves on well in Year 2, where pupils read with understanding in an accurate and fluent way. They talk readily about books they enjoy, know the difference between fiction and non-fiction books and understand the use of the index, contents and a glossary.

101. The school has addressed the issue of promotion of information retrieval skills and enquiry work well. Pupils understand the classification system in the library and have developed appropriate library skills. There is now a good emphasis on guided reading sessions, which has helped to promote reading well. By Year 6, many pupils read longer texts with concentration and understanding. Higher attaining pupils show a good understanding of a variety of texts, identifying the crucial features, themes and characters.
102. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development as they consider the achievements of others in texts, find out information about ancient cultures and read the poetry of famous poets, such as Robert Browning.
103. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment in writing is average by the end of Year 2 and below average by the end of Year 6. Presentation, including handwriting, is not as good as it should be in classes of older pupils. This is linked to variability in marking. Where there are very high expectations and marking is particularly supportive, pupils try their best and presentation is better, such as in Years 1 and 2 and usually in Years 3 and 4. However, writing is quite often in pencil in the older juniors with work that is not underlined neatly and work that is messy. These weaknesses are not only affecting some of the quality of writing in literacy but also affect the written work in other subjects, such as mathematics when mistakes could be made because work is not set out correctly.
104. Pupils make good progress through Year 1 and this continues through Year 2. Teachers offer their pupils a good range of work within literacy. They encourage them to write in a variety of forms. In Year 1, higher attaining pupils retell some events in stories using sentences with capital letters and full stops. Pupils in Year 2 use an appropriate style to write instructions from their previously constructed flow diagrams and use imaginative vocabulary when writing poems. Higher attaining pupils are forming their writing neatly and making appropriate attempts at spelling using their knowledge of sounds when writing their news, stories and poems.
105. Standards in writing in Year 6 are below average but pupils do have a sound understanding and recognise the importance of writing for different audiences within literacy. In addition, there is a satisfactory focus on different styles and genres. Evidence found included: letters, poems, instructions, book reviews, debates and play scripts although too little work has been completed in Year 5. As in the last inspection, there are still too few opportunities for pupils to write at length, although there are some good opportunities of writing in a variety of ways in other subjects. A few higher attaining pupils write in a lively style and use imaginative vocabulary when they write stories and poems. However, not all have the ability to use exciting and interesting language, write in extended sentences or organise their work effectively with an audience in mind. Some pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the use of paragraphs, parts of speech and make good attempts at spelling, but overall these are weaker areas. Teachers of older pupils do not insist on joined handwriting that is neat and legible, there is too much variability in handwriting and some pupils still print. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 continue to make good progress in literacy because teaching of basic skills is good and expectations are higher. Consequently work is much neater and pupils complete more work of a good standard.
106. The quality of teaching is good overall with very good teaching in Years 1 and 2. The vast majority of lessons are well planned and based on the National Literacy Strategy. The school's good procedures for behaviour management, which are consistently applied by all staff, mean that the management of pupils is good. This aspect is considerably enhanced by the very good relationships teachers have with pupils. Very

good attention is given to including most pupils well in learning. The support given by the teaching assistants is good and a considerable strength of the school. This is especially so for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. The teaching assistants help to explain things during introductions and pupils are encouraged to prepare their answers before answering in front of the whole class. There is particularly effective support offered by the sign communicator and also those working with the visually impaired pupils. This ensures most pupils are fully included in lessons. This gives significant support to their self-esteem. However, the needs of higher attaining pupils are not always met in Years 5 and 6, although this is improving for Year 6 pupils. Homework has been planned to support learning satisfactorily and matched to work undertaken in the classroom.

107. Many pupils use computers to search for information on CD-ROM and the Internet and so are developing their reading research skills satisfactorily. By Year 6, pupils skim and scan and take notes effectively from information from web sites to enable them to prepare their part in a debate. Pupils in a Year 3 lesson, when learning about the Romans, search for different types of food that would be eaten and devise a menu for a Roman banquet. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used satisfactorily to support and extend literacy in a number of ways, including word processing stories, letters and poems and research. However, there are occasions when older pupils' keyboard skills are not good enough and this has a negative impact during literacy lessons, as it impedes progress during the lesson. Other subjects, such as art and design contribute to pupils' skills in literacy when they discuss their work, in design and technology when they record their findings and in history when they use their research skills to locate information.
108. The co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership for the subject. The school has made satisfactory improvement in addressing the key issue but not enough progress in providing opportunities for pupils to write at length. In addition there has not been enough done to address the below average standards for older pupils. Raising standards of writing has been identified as a priority on the school improvement plan and a detailed action plan to tackle this area has been put in place. The use of the school library has improved and the management of the library is good. The library has set out very useful guidance on developing library skills and has ensured that the library is well stocked to enable pupils to carry out research effectively. This has had a positive impact on their research and retrieval and enquiry skills, which was a key issue in the last inspection. Pupils are developing good skills with retrieving information in books, which supports their learning in other subjects, such as history.

MATHEMATICS

109. Standards in mathematics are average at the end of Year 2, and below average at the end of Year 6. Attainment varies most years depending on the different groups of pupils who are in each class. Pupils in the current Years 2 and 4 are average and in Year 3, well above average. In Years 5 and 6 standards are below expectation. However, the current Year 6 are on course to achieve higher results than in 2002, although not enough pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve the national average, or the higher Level 5. By the time pupils leave Year 2, many pupils also achieve the higher Level 3. By the time pupils leave Year 6, very few pupils achieve the higher level. Higher attaining pupils in these classes do not make as much progress as they could. This is because they do not systematically undertake work that fully stretches and extends them. This problem is a priority identified by the school. The school has a number of factors that impact on the standards they are achieving. A high proportion of pupils have special educational

needs. There is a high turnover of pupils who come and leave in the junior classes, with many who join having very low attainment.

110. There have been a number of improvements since the time of the previous inspection; standards are much higher by the end of Year 2. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced and teaching is better. The intervention strategies such as 'springboard' are helping pupils to catch up. The school has made satisfactory progress with issues identified at the time of the previous report. This is because there is a better balance between number activities and practical problem solving activities.
111. Most of the teaching observed during the inspection throughout the school is at least good. Good and very good teaching in Years 1 to 4 means that by seven, pupils make very good progress and by the end of Year 4, good progress. Progress slows in Years 5 and 6. Where teaching is particularly good, questions are used effectively and there is good pace. There is a range of activities, pitched at children's different needs. Time is found at the end of the lessons for pupils to reflect on their learning. For example, in a very good lesson with a mixed class of Year 1 and 2 pupils, aspects of symmetry were taught in a lively and engaging way through art. This captured the interest and enthusiasm of both age groups. The teacher skilfully ensured that the work was pitched at the right level for the different groups. Great care was taken to include pupils with English as an additional language and as a result they extend their speaking skills. Time was built in for pupils to talk about what they had learnt about symmetry and the properties of different shapes. This practical approach is evident in all Infant classes and gives them a really good grounding before they join the junior classes.
112. Teachers in Years 3 and 4 build successfully on the pupils' learning and extend the many high achieving pupils in their classes. The 'catch up' springboard sessions are full of fun and good humour and well taught by a learning support assistant. Pupils clearly enjoy these short sessions and work hard. Teaching, while satisfactory in Years 5 and 6, is not as strong as the rest of the school. Teachers use mathematical language well and time is given for pupils to explain how they arrive at their answers. There is additional time in Year 6 to improve pupils' oral, mental computation skills. While the work is securely based on the National Numeracy Strategy, the pace is not always fast enough. A number of pupils identified as particularly able in Years 5 and 6 could make better progress. They spend too much time on the work of the rest of the class before beginning more challenging work.
113. Across the school pupils with special educational needs and who speak English as an additional language make good progress. This is because they are well supported by learning support assistants who informally assess their needs. Hearing impaired pupils and visually impaired pupils make very good progress in classes and in the units. This is because they have good quality adapted materials and are taught well by specialist teachers. This inclusive approach benefits all pupils. For example, two fully sighted older pupils enjoy their sessions in the unit where they work in a small group with visually impaired pupils.
114. Teachers throughout the school have very good relationships with their pupils. They encourage pupils to reflect on their learning. In a very good lesson in Year 3, a representative from each group fed back what they had learnt. In this lesson there was a constant 'buzz' of activity, with pupils working successfully in small groups. Most pupils respond well to the teaching they receive. Their attitudes to their work are usually positive, and behaviour is generally good. A small minority of older pupils find it more difficult to concentrate on their work. They need a lot of encouragement to stay on task. Marking is not always in sufficient detail to point pupils in the right direction. It does not generally refer to the pupil's individual targets. In Year 5 not all the pupils' work is

marked and the teachers do not ensure that the work in their books is neat. Some pupils do not complete enough work on a weekly basis to enable them to cover the programme of study. An appropriate range of mathematical homework is given across the school on a regular basis.

115. Numeracy skills are used appropriately to aid learning in other subjects, particularly in design and technology, history and science. When ICT is used, it is used well. For example, in Year 5 when pupils collated comparative information about Britain and India on a bar graph. However, computers are not used regularly enough to help pupils with their learning. All classes have attractive numeracy areas, with a good range of equipment.
116. The co-ordinator, although no longer class based, shares her expertise by teaching older pupils once a week. Management is generally good. Teachers' planning and pupils' work are regularly checked. Test results are analyzed to check attainment is high enough for all groups including gender and ethnicity. Any differences are identified for action. However, monitoring needs to focus more closely on improving some weaker aspects of teaching and learning. It needs to ensure work is sufficiently challenging for all pupils, particularly higher attainers.

SCIENCE

117. Standards in science are above average at the end of Year 2, and below average at the end of Year 6. There are some variations within year groups, with average standards in Years 3 and 4 and below average standards in Year 5. Progress varies across the school, with satisfactory progress over time in Years 3 and 4, and good progress over time in Years 1 and 2. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have made unsatisfactory progress over time. This reflects the quality of the past teaching, with many staffing changes over the last few years. These changes have held back the pupils' learning and hindered their progress. Parents are right to be concerned. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and their progress reflects this. Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive good support and they progress as well as their classmates.
118. During the inspection, Year 2 pupils were investigating the similarities and differences between living things. The teacher briskly led the class in a discussion about similarities and differences between 'ourselves and a cat'. Their attention was captured straight away, allowing the lesson to flow forward effectively. All the class were involved, and the positive working atmosphere meant that no time was wasted. Differences were speedily identified e.g. 'Cats have body hair, whiskers, a long tail and they mew'. The teacher challenged this by asking 'Are whiskers like a beard? What about claws and finger nails?' The teacher's sensitive but challenging approach promoted very effective learning by making very good use of the higher attaining pupils to explain to the others. Similarities were drawn out very well, e.g. breathing, growth, live babies and eating food, to name just a few.
119. The very good pace was maintained throughout but the teacher was always prepared to recap, to check out learning and understanding before moving on. This meant that all the pupils' learning was well promoted. In this lesson, ICT was well used to support learning. Pupils used a CD-ROM to research their work, and their basic information and communication technology skills were securely in place. Good planning gave a clear idea about how tasks were modified to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities. The teacher's clear instructions meant that all the pupils knew what they had to do, as well as understand her high expectations about what was expected. Pupils rose to the

challenges set. They were clear about the lesson objectives, relating these effectively to their own experiences.

120. In the less successful lessons with some older junior pupils, many of these factors were missing. Tasks were either too hard or too easy and the pace of the lesson was too slow. Work was not planned at the right levels and the higher attaining pupils were not challenged enough. Pupils' suggestions and ideas were not developed and so they lost interest in their learning. When this happened, the pupils' behaviour deteriorated quickly. Standards were below expectations for the age group.
121. Year 6 pupils had a challenging lesson on light and shadows. The teacher knew her subject well, and the pupils were fully engaged in identifying sources of light, and investigating the length of shadows. Most pupils were secure about what is meant by a 'fair test', and they used this knowledge when starting to plan the investigation. However, many pupils were less secure about how to set about planning and recording their investigation, and many of them did not think about recording their findings in a table. Standards fell short of expectations.
122. The classroom is small for pupils of this age and size, and they are unable to take part in the investigation themselves. Their teacher demonstrates well, but the pupils need to have 'hands on' experiences if their investigative skills are to develop at an appropriate pace. Scrutiny of work from this class shows that they are making good progress since the start of the term. This is due to stronger teaching. However, their standards were lower than expected for Year 6 pupils at the beginning of the school year, and there is much ground to catch up. The higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough in their lessons and this means that their standards are not as high as they could be. One reason for this is that challenging tasks are not always planned at the right levels and this holds them back.
123. Science is another subject that is currently being managed temporarily for a short time. The co-ordinator has worked hard, and she has been successful in putting a science curriculum in place that is broad and balanced, and is well understood by the pupils and staff. Teaching and learning are monitored, but not standards. This is a weakness, as the school's managers need to know where the subject's strengths and weaknesses are. Without this information it is difficult for them to plan the way ahead successfully. The systems for assessing and recording pupils' progress and attainment are currently being trialled. The co-ordinator needs to make sure that the same systems are in place across the entire school.

ART AND DESIGN

124. The attainment in art and design of pupils in Years 2 and 6 is in line with that expected for their age. At the time of the previous inspection, standards were above average for seven-year-olds and average for 11-year-olds. It is now average for pupils in Year 2 because pupils still do not have sufficient experience in three-dimensional work and, although pupils learn skills well in lessons, they do not have sufficient opportunity to show their initiative or to extend their imagination. Information technology was considered to be used well to support artwork – it is now satisfactory and the co-ordinator is aware that this is an area for development. Work representing the work of famous artists and craftspeople other than western art and design is limited. Too little attention is given to promoting multicultural awareness, which is a weakness in the curriculum. Better use of sketchbooks is made in Years 3 and 4. Overall provision in art

and design has been satisfactory with an increased range of visits to support the subject.

125. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress throughout the school in the areas of work offered to them. This is because pupils have good support, which helps them to be fully integrated in the art and design lesson. A very good example was observed in Year 4, when a blind pupil successfully created a picture using folded and curled paper with the very effective support of her assistant. A satisfactory range of work was produced overall because there is too little attention to three-dimensional work. Pupils express their ideas through a range of different experiences and media in art and design using prior knowledge. In a lesson in Year 2, very good learning took place because pupils built on previously learnt skills to produce still life pictures, which took account of both tone and shading.
126. Teaching observed is good overall, with particularly good teaching for pupils in Years 1 and 2. The majority of pupils work hard, enjoy art and design lessons and have positive attitudes towards the subject. Sketchbooks are used well to practise skills. For example, when Year 5 pupils learn to use a variety of pencils before they carry out observational drawings of fruit. This helps them to use pencils effectively to shade and put in good detail. There are particularly effective links with other subjects, such as history and English, as illustrated in the work of Year 6 pupils, which is linked to work about the Victorians. Effective use of pupils' research and class discussion helped establish the important events that influenced the life and works of William Morris. There is some use of ICT, particularly in Years 1 and 2, and in Year 6 where a digital camera was used to photograph pupils' designs for insertion as 'tiles' on the computer to make William Morris wall paper but generally it is limited. Younger pupils use the computer to make effective patterns of cool and warm colours, zig-zags and lines.
127. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and offers good expertise to her colleagues. She teaches most pupils in Years 1 and 2, which spreads her knowledge of the subject, but has little opportunity to work alongside teachers with older pupils. The scheme of work offers good support to non-specialists and ensures pupils are taught skills in a progressive manner. A satisfactory curriculum is in place; it is generally broad and balanced and contributes well in most aspects, to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The co-ordinator has successfully extended the use of visits to galleries, such as Henley museum and Courtaulds, to enable pupils to work together to experience new techniques and respond to the work of famous artists and sculptures. Following introductory work on 'Pointing Man' by Giacometti, Year 4 pupils visited the Tate Gallery and were delighted to see the actual statue and to sketch it and make their own figures in the workshop. Assessment is satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator collects examples of pupils' work to illustrate standards and teachers informally use sketchbooks to monitor progress. Procedures for assessment are due to be implemented this year but as yet there are no consistent assessment procedures to track pupils' progress and attainment through the school; this is a weakness.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

128. Due to the organisation of the timetable only one lesson was observed during the inspection therefore judgements could not be made about teaching. Standards by the age of seven are above that expected for this time of year and as expected for 11-year-olds. This was determined by discussion with pupils and work samples provided. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection when they were all as

expected. Pupils make good progress by the age of seven and satisfactory progress by the age of 11.

129. Pupils in Year 2 are enthusiastic about their work. They explain well how they designed their different vehicles and use correct terms such as doweling and axle wheels. They have a good understanding of the equipment they used and can evaluate their work. As one child noted 'an elastic band can slow down my wheel, but it might break so I used a pipe cleaner because it was easier to bend'. This is an improvement from the previous inspection when their skills of designing were not as good as their skills of making.
130. By the age of 11, pupils also talk with enthusiasm about their design and technology work. Projects such as the 'Pizza challenge' help bring the subject to life. Pupils particularly enjoy food technology and again this is an improvement from the previous inspection when it was not delivered or planned for properly.
131. The school has adopted the nationally recommended scheme of work. Planning and work samples collected by the co-ordinator indicates that generally the school follows the agreed guidance. Across the school, pupils have had a range of experiences using a range of materials and equipment and including food technology. Design and evaluation features are firmly in place. Good use is made of proformas throughout the school, to help pupil's design and evaluate their own work. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use computers, either to help them design their work or for exploring control technology. The co-ordinator has identified this as an area to develop further.
132. The Year 3 lesson observed during the inspection week was well planned and taught. The teacher had high expectations of behaviour and work. Therefore, pupils produced a range of attractive picture frames to at least a satisfactory standard. Good use was made of their previous design specifications to remind pupils of previous design decisions. The teacher and the learning support assistant reinforced the need to handle equipment safely. Pupils responded well to the regular low key advice and praise, evaluating as they went along. An opportunity was missed for pupils to fully select their materials. The teacher valued the contribution of boys and girls equally and pupils clearly enjoyed the task and worked well together.
133. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic about the subject and has a clear idea of what is needed next to move forward. She monitors the planning and has observed teaching and learning, giving informal advice as requested. Good links are made with other subjects, for example, designing musical instruments, or using numeracy, literacy and art and design skills to record their work. Assessment of design and technology is in its early stages and not in use fully across the school. Resources are good.

GEOGRAPHY

134. Due to the organisation of the timetable only one lesson was observed during the inspection and therefore judgements could not be made about teaching. Discussion with pupils and work samples provided shows that standards are as expected by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils make satisfactory progress. This is the same picture as at the time of the previous inspection. Those with special educational needs and who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Pupils from the unit base make very good progress because work and teaching is adapted to suit their individual needs. Younger pupils who had less time in school make good progress by the age of seven.

135. Work from last year shows that by the age of seven pupils have covered the planned curriculum appropriately through a range of practical experiences. Pupils make simple maps of the school site and surrounding area and undertake traffic surveys. Mapping skills are developed early and pupils are encouraged to extract information. In a good lesson with Year 1 and 2 pupils, the teacher taught pupils safety issues outside the school gate. The teacher used photographs with local traffic signs and road markings. This helped pupils to build up a clear picture of their immediate area.
136. By the end of Year 2, pupils have learnt about parts of England, Ireland and Wales and the island of St Lucia through the travels of Barnaby Bear. Year 2 pupils can describe Barnaby Bear's journey to Ireland. They know he uses different types of transport. For example, that he went by taxi and was able to get on a plane to Dublin only after showing his passport! From discussion they know that maps are important for finding your way about. They know they live in Reading, which is in England.
137. From last year's work, by the end of Year 6, pupils have covered mapping skills and undertaken some directional work with a compass. They have studied major features of Europe in appropriate depth. From discussion they understand some major differences between the life of an Indian girl compared to their lives. They can discuss environmental issues concerning water conservation and waste. Visits are used well to reinforce geography skills. Regular field trips in the locality and visits to Tregoyd House, Thames Water and The Living Rainforest all give pupils scope to apply their mapping skills and explore environmental issues. Samples of work show pupils with visual impairment are fully included through the use of adapted material in Braille.
138. Skills such as numeracy, literacy and art and design are used well to support learning in geography. For example, in a good Year 5 lesson, mathematics and ICT skills were used well to analyse information about India. The graphs produced formed a useful source of information for pupils to discuss and make predictions. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' knowledge and appreciation of different culture.
139. Throughout their time at school there is a progressive build up of skills. Research skills are sufficiently developed. Pupils get regular opportunities to use texts, photos and maps. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities to access information from CD-ROM or the Internet. The previous inspection identified the need to further develop assessment and the use of ICT. While some progress has been made these two issues still require further development.
140. There have been some improvements since the previous inspection. The school has adopted the recommended national scheme of work and recently purchased a published scheme to complement it. The co-ordinator is a geography specialist and has clear priorities to continue to take the subject forward. She has purchased CD-ROM that includes interactive research materials. Resources are improved and there are a good range of maps and atlases to support the curriculum.

HISTORY

141. The levels of history skills and understanding acquired by pupils in Years 2 and 6 are in line with those expected. Progress is good throughout the school and for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Good progress has been made in tackling the key issue from the previous inspection, particularly for older pupils, as they use research methods to find out about famous people and events in history.

142. No lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2. Through discussion with pupils in Year 2, it is evident that their concept of time is satisfactorily developed through the comparisons between events in the past and the present day and through their place in the family. They are aware of the contribution made by individuals such as Grace Darling and Neil Armstrong and made comments on what it must have been like to have been the first person walking on the moon. Pupils are keen to talk about their knowledge in history and offer their views with enthusiasm.
143. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 use a variety of research methods now to support learning. Satisfactory use is made of ICT, as shown in the use of CD-ROM as Year 3 pupils find out what Romans might eat during a banquet. The Internet and non-fiction books are effectively used to research biographies in order to gather information about the Victorians in Year 6. This was in preparation for a debate about notable people, such as Emmeline Pankhurst and Thomas Edison and the contribution they made to society. Good research methods meant that pupils could convincingly put forward their views about a chosen Victorian, thereby enhancing their debating skills. The use of role-play has been improved. Year 4 pupils successfully put themselves in the roles of those who discovered the tomb of Tutankhamun and had lived during the period in Egyptian history. They demonstrated careful listening by relevant questions and answers, speaking with confidence in role as Howard Carter, or others.
144. The quality of teaching observed is good. Teachers are particularly adept at making lessons interesting and conducting them at a good pace. This had the effect of enhancing pupils' learning and their enjoyment of the subject. Teachers promote numeracy and literacy skills well, through debating and research methods in literacy and through reinforcing the dates that people lived and use of timelines. This means Year 2 pupils identify the dates that Grace Darling lived and died from the text. The work of the staff from the hearing and visual resource bases is very effective, as is the skilful integration by sign communicator as she ensures that pupils are fully informed during the history lessons. This helps them learn and put forward information well and be fully involved in the discussion in Year 6.
145. The staff benefit by having an enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator. Planning is monitored to ensure coverage of the subject, but as yet there is little monitoring of teaching and learning. Delivery of the curriculum is through a series of topics, which properly reflect the programme of the National Curriculum. Good links are made between history and other subjects, for example, the art and crafts of William Morris. History makes a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development as they learn about people in different times and the contribution people made and work co-operatively to prepare debates. The co-ordinator effectively promotes the history of the school through the time-lines club. Pupils highlight notable events, and using their word-processing skills, create a notice to continue the time-line around the hall.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

146. The school has worked hard to improve its provision for ICT, with some success, but there is still much to be done. Teachers have undergone extra training and the school now has more computers. Standards for the seven-year-olds are broadly average for this time in the school year, but they are below this level for many of the 11-year-olds. The information and communication technology curriculum is in place, but there are gaps in the pupils' knowledge and understanding. Their progress over time is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, but falls short of expectations in many, but not all, of the other classes.

147. By the end of Year 2, pupils can use a mouse, operate the space bar and shift keys, and use a range of programs to help with their reading, writing and number skills successfully. This group are independent learners, and they enjoy helping and supporting each other as in a lesson on shapes. Other pupils matched words, letters and pictures successfully. Both these groups printed out their work quickly and speedily. When talking to the pupils they had a secure understanding of how to program a toy so that it moved in a particular direction. Their knowledge and understanding indicated sound teaching, which has given them the necessary skills.
148. In Years 3 to 6, conversations with pupils indicate that for many of them their ICT skills are sound, but that their knowledge is very variable. For instance, older pupils had little knowledge about how to control equipment by a series of instructions to achieve particular results. Some pupils could use e-mail, others could not. In one lesson, Year 6 pupils were making sense of data, following their investigations on light sensors. The more capable pupils were learning how to use computerised systems to predict results and to test them. This was demanding for the higher attaining pupils, and they rose to the challenge, but many of the others were not equipped to take on this level of learning. However, they all tried hard and concentrated well because they were interested in the lesson. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs are very well supported, and they all progress well. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make the same progress as their classmates.
149. Only a small amount of direct teaching was seen. Where this happened, teachers' lesson plans made good use of ICT to support learning. Teachers were knowledgeable about ICT and lessons moved forward at an appropriate pace, as in a Year 4 mathematics lesson. However, there is little evidence in pupils' work, or in discussions with them, to show that the full range of the curriculum is covered in every class. Pupils of all capabilities are not being challenged enough. There were missed opportunities to develop ICT in some lessons, and in others it was not planned. There is little evidence to show that pupils' use of computers is monitored to ensure that all pupils have sufficient access to computers. The school is not meeting its requirements in information and communication technology fully.
150. Because of staffing changes, the subject has been temporarily managed by the deputy headteacher, now the acting headteacher. She has had a number of other subjects to manage at the same time, as well as managing the school. This has been a very heavy workload, and she has done her best to move the subject forward. ICT is now to be managed by a new co-ordinator, who has the necessary skills and expertise to build on earlier developments and develop the subject further.

MUSIC

151. Standards of attainment are in line with expectations by the age of seven and of 11. (At the time of the previous inspection, standards were above average for 11-year-olds). All pupils make satisfactory progress with composing and evaluating skills and good progress with their singing skills, which are above that expected nationally.
152. While standards are not as high because not all pupils benefit from specialist teaching, as in the previous inspection, music still has strengths within the curriculum. Singing is above that expected. In lessons and in assemblies pupils sing tunefully and with real expression. They are well taught in song practice by the school's music co-ordinator. She has high expectations and gives very good advice on breathing control. She encourages pupils to sing with feeling and to fit the mood to the purpose. Boys, girls

and pupils with hearing impairment are fully included in singing activities because of the skills of an excellent signer.

153. All infant pupils are taught by the school's specialist music co-ordinator. This is effective as she builds up their skills systematically. As a result most make good progress from a low starting point. As soon as pupils join the school, music and singing are used to support pupils' number skills, listening skills, physical and creative development.
154. By the end of Year 2, most pupils can name the instruments they use. They can keep the beat of a tune using their fingers and confidently join in most songs. They have some awareness of composing. Following a listening walk, they made sensible suggestions to include particular instruments. A good example of this was choosing a whistle to represent birds and a tambourine to represent plastic blowing in the wind.
155. In the juniors, while the co-ordinator occasionally takes classes, generally pupils are taught by their class teachers. The co-ordinator is a real enthusiast and when she does take junior pupils (as she did in Year 5) they responded well and made very good progress. In a well taught lesson in Year 6, the teacher although not a music specialist led the session effectively. By the end of the lesson pupils built up a three-part round, which they later performed in an assembly. This was a well-integrated lesson and the signer worked very effectively with two hearing impaired pupils within a small group of five pupils. However, ICT is not used enough to support musical compositions in the juniors.
156. Music makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development particularly cultural understanding. They experience a range of music including classical, European and world music. Music is used well to support pupils' creativity in different subjects. For example, when pupils study India as part of their geography work, at the same time they learn Indian songs and listen to classical and modern Indian music. Visits to school by an Indian dance group and also a stringed instrument concert add to pupil's appreciation of music.
157. A small number of pupils have specialist tuition to a high standard in guitar and violin. Their skills are valued and used in lessons and assemblies. The school forms a special choir each year in preparation for a performance at Reading Primary Schools Music Festival. All pupils take part in the school's Christmas production and there are regular opportunities to perform during assemblies. Parents are pleased with the music provision at the school.
158. The subject is well led. The co-ordinator has produced a very good scheme, which includes helpful advice on teaching visually impaired and hearing-impaired pupils. Music is used well across the curriculum and supports most subjects. She supports staff informally. Resources are good and include keyboards and some high quality instruments from different cultures.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

159. Only a very small number of lessons were seen so it is not possible to judge the standards of the oldest pupils in Year 6. Standards at the end of Year 2 are above average in dance, as they were at the last inspection. The standards in the lower juniors are about average in gymnastics. The teaching seen was good, with many very good features. Pupils achieved well.

160. Year 2 pupils are able to move their bodies imaginatively. They successfully created a 'penguin' movement, contrasting this with a heavy 'polar bear' movement in very cold weather. The teacher's use of a short video clip at the start of the lesson aroused the pupils' interest well, encouraging them to put forward their own ideas about the type of movements they could perform. This worked very successfully because it enabled the teacher to develop the relevant vocabulary, creating a 'cold atmosphere' for the pupils.
161. Pupils' skills were developed very well throughout the lesson because of the very good teaching. By working individually and then in a group, the pupils' successfully evaluated the quality of each other's movements. This helped them to improve their own skills as they tried hard to do better. As the lesson moved on, the pupils demonstrated their growing skills of interpreting the mood and feelings of their characters in a cold country. The teacher's high expectations about the standards she expected as well as how she expected the pupils to behave in the hall, meant that the pupils rose to the challenges set for them. Standards were high and very good progress was made by all the pupils, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language.
162. In a gymnastics lesson with lower juniors, the pupils also worked on developing a sequence of movements. The teacher successfully drew on their previous skills and knowledge about moving over and under each other so that their bodies were stretched or curled at different levels. This extended into working with a partner, with some good demonstrations that improved the pupils' performance all round. The lesson was pitched at the right levels for all the pupils, tasks were challenging and relationships were good; the pupils' skills improved well.
163. The subject is led very well. The co-ordinator has a very secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject, for example, her next priority is to improve standards in swimming. Work is also on-going to improve how teachers assess their pupils' progress. Links with local teams are in the pipeline, and other links with the local secondary school all help to widen the range of physical education experiences that are open to the pupils at St Michael's School.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

164. Standards of attainment are in line with expectations of the Agreed Syllabus by the age of seven and 11. (As they were at the time of the previous inspection). Discussion with pupils, as well as looking at the pupils' work indicate that, by the end of Year 2, a significant minority of pupils has a good knowledge of religious education. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress and those with special educational needs and who speak English as an additional language make good progress. This is because they are often supported in lessons. Younger pupils who had less time in school make good progress.
165. Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. Daily acts of collective worship contribute well to pupils' religious knowledge and understanding of different faiths. Pupils learn religious hymns and are invited to join in a prayer at the end of each session. They have time to reflect on religious, spiritual and moral themes throughout the year.
166. Discussion with pupils and samples of work shows that, by the end of Year 2, they have built up their religious knowledge and understanding appropriately. They have learnt a range of religious stories such as Noah's Ark and Rama and Sita. They have

some factual knowledge of different festivals including harvest, the Jewish Passover, Diwali, Christmas and the Chinese New Year.

167. Due to the organisation of the timetable only two lessons were observed during the inspection and therefore an overall judgement could not be made about teaching. In a very good Year 2 lesson, the teacher really fired the pupils' interest with imaginative teaching and good quality resources. As a result the pupils showed real enthusiasm and were able to relate Diwali to other festivals. They know that it is a special time for Hindus and Sikhs and that it is a festival of light. Infant teachers show they value pupils work by the way topics are presented in attractive folders. The use of standard worksheets and pupils' own drawings makes recording easier. Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations of presentation and their work is generally neat.
168. Scrutiny of pupils' work and the co-ordinators file shows that by the end of Year 6, the locally agreed syllabus has been covered. Pupils learn about major faiths, and what it means to belong and how to be a good citizen. They learn about the significance of symbols for different religions. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 do not cover all aspects in sufficient depth to extend the higher attainers and marking is not always in sufficient detail.
169. A strong feature across the school is it ensures all pupils are included well in all lessons. For example, planning ensures that visually impaired and hearing-impaired pupils are fully included. In addition, last year's work by a visually impaired Muslim pupil, (which included Braille and conventional script) was used as a source of information for the class. This valuing of pupils' own religious background was also seen in a Year 6 lesson. In this the teacher skilfully encouraged a pupil to share further information about the Hindu Lord Ganesh. The rest of the class were really interested in her contribution.
170. There have been some improvements since the time of the previous inspection. The school provides opportunities for junior pupils to visit non-Christian places of worship. Pupils have regular opportunities to develop their research skills. However, opportunities are still missed for pupils to use computers systematically as a source of information.
171. The recently appointed co-ordinator has received good support from the previous co-ordinator and is well placed to continue to manage the subject well. The school has a good range of resources, including posters, religious objects and books, which enhance pupils' learning.