

INSPECTION REPORT

MERESIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Blackpool

LEA area: Blackpool

Unique reference number: 119345

Headteacher: Mr Stephen Burton

Reporting inspector: Mrs Penny Parrish
22380

Dates of inspection: 17 – 20 March 2003

Inspection number: 248002

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: 3 – 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Langdale Road
Blackpool

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D Sloan

Date of previous inspection: November 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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22380	Mrs Penny Parrish Registered inspector	Science Art and design Music English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are the pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
19343	Mrs M Howel Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18344	Mr D Earley Team inspector	English Design and technology Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?
19916	Mrs D Kerr Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Religious education Educational inclusion	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
22058	Mrs C Richardson Team inspector	Geography History Provision for children in the Foundation Stage Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a larger than average primary school, situated on a council owned housing estate on the outskirts of Blackpool. There is a high level of unemployment among parents and an exceptionally high number of pupils, 61 per cent, are eligible for free school meals. There are 228 full-time pupils on roll between the ages of four and 11 years; 17 children attend the nursery for either the morning or the afternoon session. The levels of attainment of most children as they start in the nursery are low in comparison to those found in most other schools nationally. A high proportion of pupils have special educational needs (39 per cent). Most have moderate learning difficulties, and some have behavioural problems. A higher than average number, six pupils, have a Statement of Special Educational Need. Almost all pupils are of white British ethnic background. A small number of pupils of Turkish heritage are in the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils on roll is diminishing, largely due to a falling birth rate in the locality. A high proportion of pupils join or leave the school mid-term; in the last school year, 37 pupils left and 61 pupils joined the school other than at the usual times.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Mereside does well for its pupils. The quality of education provided is good and standards are good in comparison to schools with pupils from a similar background. Very good leadership and management by headteacher and senior staff give clear direction to the work of the school. The governing body is effective and fulfils its duties well. Expenditure is relatively very high, but teaching is good and pupils achieve well; the school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is a caring, welcoming community. Relationships are good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well.
- Determined and effective leadership in recent years has led to rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and, consequently, in the quality of pupils' learning and behaviour.
- Teaching and learning are good, overall, and pupils achieve well. In the nursery and Reception classes, teaching is very good and the children get off to a good start to school.
- The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, nurtures pupils well and ensures that they make good progress.

What could be improved

- Despite the good achievement evident for most pupils, standards in mathematics for pupils in Year 2 and in English for pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6 are not as high as they should be.
- Standards in information and communication technology and religious education are improving but not yet high enough for pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Assessment systems are not in place for subjects other than English, mathematics and science.
- Attendance is well below the national figures.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since it was last inspected in June 2001, the school has made very good improvement. It has built successfully on the greatly improved and positive ethos within the school noted at that time. The quality of teaching has been raised from satisfactory to good in a short time. Improvements are due to good strategic planning that includes staff training, efficient management, rigorous checking

procedures and the strong commitment of the staff to provide well for the pupils. Standards are consequently rising rapidly, recognised by the School Achievement Award in 2002. Provision for pupils in the nursery and Reception classes has made very good improvement over the past year. The roles and responsibilities of subject co-ordinators are now suitably defined and organised. The leadership and management systems of the school are secure and clearly focused on moving the school forward. Despite the very good efforts of the school, attendance figures are still too low.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	E	B	E	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	E	D	D	B	
Science	D	C	D	A	

Inspection evidence indicates that by the end of Year 6, standards are in line with the average nationally in mathematics and science but below average in English. This shows a good improvement on results in 2002. In comparison with similar schools, standards are above average. Compared to the previous performance of the pupils in tests in Year 2, results at Year 6 show very good improvement. Results are on an upward trend but fluctuate according to the specific learning difficulties of a high proportion of each year group. In 2002, 60 per cent of pupils in Year 6 had special educational needs. In addition, the school has a high number of transient pupils. Despite these challenges, the school meets pupils' needs well and their achievement is good. Targets for Year 6 are sensibly set high to help to extend the school's performance. In 2002, targets for Year 6 were achieved in mathematics but not quite reached in English.

In Year 2, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is below average, but improved on the well below average results in national tests in 2002. The school has found it more difficult to raise results in Year 2 but improvements this year to staffing and teaching methods in Years 1 and 2 indicate an upward trend. Very good improvements in the nursery and Reception classes mean that the children's attainments are improving rapidly at the earliest stages in the school. Although most children's attainment is below the goals set nationally as they transfer from Reception to Year 1, the children achieve very well and make good progress from a low starting point.

Standards in other subjects meet national expectations in both Year 2 and Year 6, except in information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education, where attainment is not as high as it should be in Years 5 and 6. Insufficient evidence was available to make a clear overall judgement in music for pupils in Year 6.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils find their lessons interesting and most try hard to achieve their best. They enjoy the rewards provided by the school for good effort.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The school is orderly and pupils conduct themselves well both in lessons, at dinnertime and around the school. Pupils show suitable

	respect for others and generally co-operate well. Pupils with specific behaviour difficulties improve well because the school knows how to help them to do their best.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Positive attitudes and good relationships provide a welcoming community in which pupils thrive.
Attendance	Well below average, overall. Most pupils attend regularly but a small group has a poor attendance record. This group includes some of the pupils who join then leave the school at other than the usual times.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	YEARS 1 – 2	YEARS 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching is good in English and mathematics and pupils learn well; literacy and numeracy are given high priority and the arrangement of pupils into classes according to prior attainment helps teachers to focus well on their needs. There is a significant proportion of very good and sometimes excellent teaching, particularly in Year 6, which means that pupils are well prepared for transfer to high school. Teaching is of a consistently high standard in the nursery and Reception classes. Teaching is good in all subjects except ICT, religious education and music in Years 3 to 6, where it is satisfactory overall. Although recent improvements are evident in these subjects, teachers' skills are not consistently good at the higher level expected for the older pupils. The new computer suite is improving pupils' learning in ICT, but taking time to affect the level of attainment of pupils in Years 5 and 6.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall and good in the nursery and Reception classes. The curriculum is suitably planned; all required subjects are fully taught. Improvements are in hand to ensure that provision reaches a suitable depth for the older pupils in all subjects. In ICT and religious education, there is some catching-up to do.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school is strongly committed to providing well for these pupils and a good level of staffing means that arrangements are effective. Recent training and the installation of a 'quiet room' mean that provision for pupils with behaviour difficulties is good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The small number of pupils in this category are supported well. The good level of staffing enables frequent dialogue with adults and a teaching assistant, fluent in the pupils' home language, aids their understanding.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for the social and moral development of pupils is strong and has enabled good improvements in pupils' behaviour and personal development in recent years. The School Council, sensitive discussions in lessons, available responsibilities and duties make sure pupils increase in maturity.

	Good. The school cares for the pupils' health and safety well and makes very good efforts to improve pupils' attendance records.
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	Assessment systems are good in some subjects but not fully established in others.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Satisfactory. The school has good relationships with parents but, despite good efforts, has achieved only satisfactory success in encouraging parents to become involved in the work of their own children and of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Very clear educational direction means the school has made rapid improvement since the appointment of the current headteacher. The senior management team is skilled, ambitious and knows what the school needs to do to improve further.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are well involved in the management of the school and are effective in checking that the school is doing its best for pupils.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good, overall, and very good in English and mathematics. A rigorous system is in place for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and the improving the standards achieved by Year 2 and Year 6.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The budget is high but used to good effect. Funds are supplemented well to extend provision for pupils. Suitable planning and checks on spending are in place. The school works hard to compare its own performance with other schools, to make sure best value is achieved. Parents, pupils and staff are regularly consulted in order to maintain continuous improvement.

There is a good ratio of staff to pupils and consequently provision for teaching is enhanced to a good level. Resources for learning are satisfactory, overall, and good in ICT and physical education. The school building is very well maintained and provides spacious and attractive accommodation.

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 has high expectations, teaching is good and pupils make good progress. Their children like school, behaviour is good and the school helps pupils to become mature and responsible. The school is well led and managed and the headteacher and staff are supportive and friendly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of activities outside lessons. The information provided about their children's progress.

The inspectors agree with the parents' positive views and find the school to be successful in all these areas. The inspectors also find the range of activities arranged for outside lessons to be good and much improved on recent years. There is strong provision for residential visits, in particular. The information provided about the pupils' progress is good and readily available on a day-to-day basis. However, the end-of-year written reports on pupils are sometimes hard to understand. The school is aware of parents' views and is working on producing a clearer version.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. For pupils in Year 6, results in national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 have moved forward rapidly since the very low level of four years ago. The school is justly proud of qualifying for the national School Achievement Award in 2002. This inspection finds that standards have made further improvement and are now meeting the national expectations in mathematics and science at the end of Year 6, although still below them in English. Compared to similar schools, standards are good, especially in science. For pupils in Year 2, results have been slower to rise but inspection evidence shows that, although standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below average, they are much improved on the well below average results in the national tests in 2002. Standards are broadly average in science at the end of Year 2.

2. When the children start school in the nursery, in most cases, their attainments are low compared to most three-year-olds. This presents the school with a significant challenge but teaching in the nursery and Reception classes has recently improved and is now very good. Consequently, the children achieve very well, particularly in personal, social and emotional development and in developing their communication, literacy and numeracy skills. The curriculum is good and staff track children's learning diligently, matching teaching well to their needs. Despite their good progress, the low starting point means that most children are unlikely to attain the expected levels in all areas of learning except physical and creative development on transfer to Year 1.

3. The school sets a high priority on attainment in English, mathematics and science, and the pupils' achievement is good from Year 1 through to Year 6. A good proportion of time is allocated to these subjects. The school sets ambitious targets to help to generate high expectations. Individual and class targets are a successful way of making sure that the attainments of as many pupils as possible are on line to meet the level of learning specified nationally for Year 6. It is a credit to the school that most pupils achieve this level in mathematics and science although there is still work to be done in English. Results in national tests in Year 6 indicate improvements in pupils' attainments from Year 2 to Year 6 that are well above average in all three subjects. Good progress is evident through the school and the high proportion of very good teaching in Year 6 means that progress accelerates to very good for most pupils during their final year. The school's records indicate that the majority of pupils who join the school partway through their primary education make good, and sometimes very good, progress but few reach higher than average levels.

4. The setting of pupils into classes with similar levels of attainment has helped to raise standards in English and mathematics, as has the use of rigorous target setting. Careful records generally track pupils' progress. The quality of teaching has improved significantly in these subjects through the school's good checking regime. Senior staff monitor plans for teaching, regularly check samples of pupils' work and routinely observe teachers at work in order to identify strengths to be shared and areas to be developed. The school has been supported well in this work by the local education authority. In addition, the small size of classes and the contribution of teaching support staff have helped to promote learning, particularly of the lower attaining pupils. Higher attaining pupils are generally fully challenged within the higher sets in English and mathematics and through higher level questioning in science and other subjects. As a result, an increasing number of pupils have achieved at a higher level in Year 6. In Year 2, numbers of pupils reaching a higher level have been slow to improve. Setting pupils into classes according to previous attainment has been introduced in English and mathematics for Years 1 and 2 this year as a measure to help standards move forward. Better learning is also being achieved through improved teaching, such as more frequent opportunities in mathematics for practical counting and calculation games. Added to the very good improvements in the nursery and Reception classes, a significant acceleration in pupils' progress is evident.

5. By the end of Year 6, most pupils read and write with a suitable level of independence for their age. A good support system for improving the quality of pupils' writing is proving to be effective in raising standards. The pupils' reading skills are not as fully analysed by teachers and some opportunities for focused teaching are missed. Spelling and handwriting vary in quality across the school because teaching expectations are not clearly laid out. Skills in speaking and listening are generally below average by Year 6 but much improved since the pupils started school. In classes where pupils are expected to listen very well, speaking develops more quickly.

6. In mathematics, most pupils in Year 6 can apply the four rules of calculation to suitably large numbers and explain their calculations well. There are limited opportunities provided for pupils to practise and extend these skills through solving mathematical problems, but the introduction of the latest national guidelines means that this is improving. Most pupils have a suitable grasp of the properties of different shapes and of measurement. They can handle data, although their skills of presenting it through the use of computers are limited.

7. In science, pupils achieve well and develop a sound knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes, such as electricity, forces and motion. A strength of the teaching is the good provision for scientific investigation and, by Year 6, pupils are well able to conduct fair tests to extend their understanding. In this subject, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

8. In all other subjects, pupils' attainment broadly meets the expectations set by the National Curriculum by the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 except in ICT by Year 6, where attainment is below expectations. Since the recent installation of the new computer suite, standards are moving forward rapidly but are not yet fully up to standard for pupils in Years 5 and 6, mainly due to inconsistencies in the subject knowledge of teachers. This is also a factor in religious education, where standards meet the expectations laid out in the locally Agreed Syllabus by the end of Year 2 but not fully by the end of Year 6. There was insufficient evidence to make a clear judgement on standards in music in Year 6.

9. Test results indicate that the school has dealt successfully with inconsistencies between the attainment of boys and girls. The school is trying to improve the performance of boys through using more non-fiction texts in English and stories that appeal to both boys and girls. There is a higher number of male teachers than is usual in primary schools and this provides boys with an influential role model for learning.

10. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets on their individual education plans, and in the development of self-esteem and confidence. This is an improvement since the last inspection and is due to the good teaching they receive and the carefully chosen targets. The school makes good use of information gained by assessment procedures to identify pupils' needs. This means that problems with learning are identified early, clear targets guide teaching and suitable groupings of pupils in the classroom enable additional support. Assessments of the pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual time are sought and made promptly to enable teaching and learning to proceed as smoothly as possible. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language generally receives support with learning where necessary and the high adult to pupil ratio in the school means that discussions on an individual basis can be sufficiently frequent. The school is fortunate in having a teaching assistant who is fluent in the pupils' home language, enabling occasional translations to extend and assess the pupils' learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The pupils show that they enjoy their work and behaviour is good. The school has a pleasant and welcoming atmosphere and there are good relationships throughout. Attendance figures are low in comparison with other schools. The number of fixed period exclusions has

dropped significantly during the past year and there have been only two within the current school year. There have been no permanent exclusions.

12. Pupils clearly like coming to school and take a lively interest in their work. Most pupils concentrate well and are keen to work hard. An example of this was seen during an English lesson in Year 4 when pupils were so engrossed in their work that they were reluctant to finish at the end of the lesson. Pupils are keen to join activities that take place after school and thoroughly enjoy the team sports and other clubs made available.

13. The pupils' good behaviour during lessons, school assemblies, breaks and lunchtimes is evidence of the success of the school's efforts to improve the attitudes of its pupils. The inspection in 2001 highlighted a dramatic improvement in the pupils' attitudes to learning, and this improvement has been maintained. The pupils are polite and helpful and show respect for their surroundings and equipment. Behaviour in lessons is good, overall, and sometimes very good. Occasionally, when the pace of the lesson slows, some pupils become restless and lose concentration. Pupils with specific behaviour difficulties are generally managed sympathetically with good results. Sometimes, however, these pupils distract others from their work or take a disproportionate amount of the teacher's time. The pupils know and understand the school rules and feel the rewards and sanctions are used fairly by the teachers. There are few incidents of oppressive behaviour but any that do occur are dealt with promptly and fairly.

14. Pupils' personal development is good. Through the good relationships the pupils have with staff and the good personal support they receive, they become mature, sensible and polite children who are well prepared for the move to their next school at the end of Year 6. Teachers are good role models, and there is a positive and friendly atmosphere in the school. The pupils know they can turn to their teachers for help. The staff know the pupils and their families well, and this helps the pupils to feel safe and secure.

15. The pupils work well together in pairs or small groups and many examples of this were seen in lessons, such as science and mathematics. They quickly settle to work in small groups and are ready to offer help to others. The residential visits help to teach the importance of teamwork and a good example of this was seen during a rugby lesson in Year 6. There was a good sporting atmosphere, with pupils collaborating well and joining in with enthusiasm. The school operates a 'buddy' system involving pupils from Years 5 and 6 in the support of pupils in Years 1 and 2. The system is aimed at boosting the self-esteem of all pupils involved and helping the younger pupils to prepare for their move into the junior section of the school. The elected School Council members take their responsibilities seriously. There is an adequate range of duties for the pupils to carry out including that of head girl and boy, prefects and team captains. The pupils enjoy these chances to show responsibility and respond well.

16. Attendance rates have made good improvement over recent years but are still low in comparison with other schools nationally. Most pupils attend school regularly and promptly but there is a small proportion who do not. In addition, school data indicates that the relatively high number of transient pupils (who join or leave the school other than at the usual times) have poor attendance records overall. A small number of pupils arrive late to school and this occasionally disrupts the smooth start to lessons. The school day begins and finishes on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall, with a significant proportion of teaching of very good and, occasionally, excellent quality. This indicates good improvement since the last inspection, when teaching was judged to be sound. This has been achieved through the determined and persistent effort of teachers to identify the strengths in their work and to implement improvements wherever possible. The headteacher and senior management team have enabled teachers to share the best practice in the school, through lesson observations and further training where necessary. Teachers have had the opportunity to visit other schools to broaden their

experience and this has paid off particularly well for the staff in the nursery and Reception classes. One lesson in ICT and one in music were of unsatisfactory quality due to the teachers' insecure subject knowledge.

18. Teaching in the nursery and the Reception class is very good, overall, because all staff have a very good understanding of the needs of children under five. They plan very thoughtfully to give the children interesting daily experiences in the six areas of learning, using the well-organised bays well. Children grow in confidence because they have a wide range of stimulating, practical activities that enable them to develop their language and understanding. Staff assess children's progress in each activity and keep good records of what each child does as a basis for future planning. Children who take longer to develop skills and understanding, and those who develop at a quicker rate, receive additional support to maximise their learning. Staff ensure that children have opportunities to make choices and to work directly with an adult and other children each day.

19. For the pupils in Years 1 to 6, the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are well established and effectively organised. The grouping of pupils with similar attainment has helped teachers to focus more successfully on their learning needs. The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall, with a significant proportion of very good teaching. In numeracy, teaching is occasionally excellent. Consequently, pupils learn well in both subjects and make good gains from a low level on admission to school. In science, teaching is good, overall. It is very good, and sometimes excellent, in Year 6. Teachers have worked hard to incorporate investigational work of high quality and, in consequence, pupils in Year 6 have become accomplished in conducting experiments, discussing outcomes using scientific terminology and in drawing valid conclusions. In science especially but also in other subjects, the best teaching includes skilled questioning of pupils that takes learning forward at a good pace and consolidates subject vocabulary. Discussions with pupils are most beneficial where class management is very good and pupils concentrate well for a long time.

20. The teaching of ICT is improving but is inconsistent. Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2, and sound, overall, in Years 3 to 6, but ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. The establishment of the computer suite means that lessons are more frequent and a wider range of learning is achieved. All teachers have received training for the new suite but staff vary in their confidence and competence. While many lessons are of at least good quality, teaching is occasionally unsatisfactory due to weaknesses in preparation for the lesson and difficulties with operating resources, which significantly reduce pupils' opportunities for learning. Too few opportunities are found to incorporate skills in ICT across the curriculum to broaden teaching and learning opportunities. Teaching is good in all other subjects except in religious education and music in Years 3 to 6, where it is satisfactory, overall. In an unsatisfactory music lesson the teacher's insecure skills in the subject combined with problems with operating resources meant that pupils made insufficient progress. A new scheme of work for music is not fully embedded and is one of the current priorities for school development.

21. Good planning systems have been maintained since the last inspection in English and mathematics and in other subjects when teachers are using the school's more detailed 'deluxe' lesson plans. At other times, planning details are sometimes too brief to support teaching of high quality. Lesson plans are mainly hand-written, which leads to inefficiencies in building year-on-year a useful bank of suitably detailed teaching plans that can be easily adapted for future use. Teachers share the objectives for learning with pupils at the start of each lesson; consequently, pupils are clear on the purpose of each activity and this leads to well focused concentration and learning. Where teaching is very good, the teacher makes clear links with the learning objectives throughout the lesson and helps pupils to summarise their learning very well at the end. Lessons are generally well organised and managed and, in literacy and numeracy especially, meet the differing needs of pupils well. Recent results in national tests in Year 6 indicate that an increasing number of pupils generally attains at a higher level, although there were set-backs in English last year due to a very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers work successfully with pupils who join the school other than at the usual time and school data indicates that good, and sometimes very good, progress is made by these pupils. Few of these pupils, however, reaches a higher than average level of attainment.

22. Good relationships are established between staff and pupils and this means that learning takes place in an atmosphere of friendliness and co-operation. The school's behaviour policy is used well to promote good discipline, generally through rewards rather than sanctions, but sanctions are used consistently across the school where necessary. Where routines and expectations are firmly established, class management meets no problems. Where the management of pupils is less successful, teachers speak sometimes over a hum of chatter in the class, wait for volunteers to answer most questions rather than targeting individuals or groups and the pace of teaching and learning slows.

23. All staff involved with pupils who have special educational needs plan thoughtfully for their needs. Targets are now clearer and more achievable because staff have worked hard to improve them. Because pupils are grouped according to their attainment in lessons in literacy and numeracy, tasks are matched well to pupils' abilities but usually have some level of challenge. Some pupils have help on an individual basis as well as receiving additional care and attention in small groups or while working with the rest of the class. There are good records of the support given and regular sharing of information with the special needs co-ordinator.

24. Teaching assistants help the school to meet the needs of all pupils, supplementing and enabling the work of teachers very well. Their work is generally well planned and organised to provide good benefits to pupils. Extra discussions extend the work of the pupils' well and teachers plan opportunities for constructive discussion into most lessons, with arrangements for pupils to work in pairs or in small groups with an adult. Teaching assistants are not always efficiently occupied during the whole class teaching element of lessons. Although most have an important task in maintaining the involvement of pupils with special educational needs, opportunities for teaching assistants to make assessment notes, for example, to enable future teaching and learning are missed.

25. Day-to-day assessments of pupils' work are satisfactory and lesson plans are up-dated to take account of pupils' needs. Most marking of pupils' written work includes helpful comments by teachers, setting a focus for further improvements. Homework is planned systematically and extends teaching and learning in lessons suitably. In Year 6, the homework programme is more rigorous and teachers provide a good range of tasks for further improvements in English and mathematics in particular. This work is usefully supplemented in the spring term each year with homework clubs in English, mathematics and science. Pupils in Year 6 are well prepared for transfer to secondary education.

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

26. The school has worked hard since the last inspection to complete the development of a broad and relevant curriculum that successfully fulfils what is required nationally. Staff value all pupils equally as individuals, whatever their needs, and work hard to make the best provision for them. National guidelines are used as a basis for planning most subjects and these ensure that pupils' learning builds systematically on previous work. Provision for religious education now fully meets the locally Agreed Syllabus and standards are rising as a result. In music, art and ICT, the programmes of work are still being tried out and improved but are close to being complete. The national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are followed carefully and pupils are taught in classes or small groups of similar levels of attainment. Arrangements are very effective and are leading to rapidly rising standards. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to develop the basic skills of reading, writing, number and ICT in other subjects but not enough is done to plan systematically for these opportunities in order to raise standards further.

27. The school shows a strong commitment to enabling all pupils to achieve their best and provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school meets the requirements of

the national Code of Practice imaginatively and well. The higher than average number of staff in school and their good relationships with pupils are of particular benefit to those with special educational needs. The good quality of teaching organised for them, frequently individually or in small groups, leads to good, and sometimes very good, progress. The therapeutic atmosphere in the new 'Kiva Suite', for example, provides very good support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, giving an opportunity to talk through problems and feelings in a comfortable room away from the classroom. Pupils with special educational needs are well aware of their needs, their targets and their progress. They are helped to develop any special talents they show, within science or artwork, for example.

28. Teachers provide a good range of additional activities and experiences, such as clubs, sports activities, and visits out of school to enrich the curriculum. Pupils enjoy these activities and benefit greatly, as their success in local sports tournaments demonstrates. In Years 4, 5 and 6, pupils have valuable opportunities to take part in residential visits where they have the chance to try a wide range of outdoor adventure activities and to learn how to live together as a community. A sound programme of work is in place for pupils' personal, social and health education and this includes preparation for a smooth transfer to the local secondary schools from Year 6.

29. Links with the community make a satisfactory contribution to the pupils' learning. Visitors to school include speakers for assemblies, theatre groups and musicians. There are good links with local businesses that provide sponsorship and prizes for school events. The involvement of the local football club has helped to improve the school attendance rates for some pupils. Links with local high schools and colleges are satisfactory. Visits and information are exchanged prior the transfer of pupils in Year 6 to the secondary phase of their education. Students from colleges and universities practise their skills in school and pupils benefit from the increased level of staffing which this brings.

30. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Improvements identified in the last report have been extended well, with particular improvement in the provision for pupils' moral and social development. The good relationships within the school and the warm and caring attitudes of all the staff make a significant contribution to this aspect of the school's work.

31. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to explore their thoughts and feelings during school assemblies, lessons in subjects such as religious education, personal and social education, and within discussions of literature in English lessons. Ministers from local churches contribute to the school's spiritual provision well during visits to school assemblies. The teachers value the pupils' views and ideas and this promotes their sense of self-worth. There is no policy to guide staff on planning for a spiritual dimension to their lessons and opportunities are missed sometimes to enhance pupils' development.

32. The good provision for the pupils' moral development is underpinned by the school's code of behaviour. Staff set a good example and pupils respond well to the school's high expectations. Lessons in subjects such as religious education and discussions based on literature in English promote pupils' moral development. The award assemblies have played a significant part in reinforcing the value not only of good work, but also of effort, respect and care for others. Pupils are reminded of the needs of others through their charitable fund raising and through providing a warm welcome to visitors to the school.

33. Pupils' social development is promoted well. The ethos of the school naturally fosters a sense of community with clear values. School assemblies, class discussions and residential visits for pupils in Years 4 to 6 all provide opportunities for pupils and adults to co-operate and share valuable experiences. The School Council, the prefect system and the playground 'buddies' provide opportunities for older pupils to exercise leadership and responsibility. There are frequent opportunities within lessons for pupils to work in groups on practical tasks in subjects, such as science, to foster co-operation and independence. Regular class discussions provide good opportunities for pupils to express their opinions on sensitive and topical subjects, such as

relationships, anger management, anxiety and bullying. These opportunities help the pupils to gain self-confidence and increasing success within social relationships.

34. The school makes sound provision for the pupils' cultural development. Teachers provide opportunities, for example, for the pupils to study the work of famous artists and to learn how their own culture has been influenced by events in the past. Pupils learn about contrasting religions and cultures within lessons in religious education and geography. In history, pupils learn about their locality and visit nearby places of interest. The school invites a variety of speakers to meet the pupils, with topics ranging from the work of a missionary in Indonesia to that of an international footballer. The choir performs both in school and at local events, and pupils have occasional opportunities to attend theatre productions and to visit museums. The School Council provides a good opportunity for pupils of all ages to take an active part in decision making within the school, following the cultural traditions of a democracy. Through the preparation of the manifestos and the elections that follow, they gain their first experience of 'public' life and begin to experience some of the duties of citizenship.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. The personal support and guidance for pupils is good. The teachers know the pupils well and play an important part in monitoring and promoting their personal development. The school has a secure and safe environment, and the pupils know they are valued as individuals.

36. There are suitable policies in place relating to health and safety and to child protection procedures and these are consistently applied. A school governor has a specific responsibility for health and safety issues and works closely with the site manager and headteacher to ensure a safe environment. The site manager plays a key role in the management of such issues and takes this responsibility very seriously. Child protection procedures are well established and work effectively. All staff are fully aware of the procedures and the school brochure explains the policy to parents.

37. Suitable policies effectively establish the school's expectations and routines for encouraging good behaviour and the elimination of oppressive behaviour. The school recognises the importance of praise and encouragement and makes good use of the reward systems. Team points and merit marks are awarded for both good work and for effort, and are valued by pupils. The school celebrates the pupils' significant achievements through 'Award Assemblies', followed up by weekly displays of the certificates and the work achieved. These arrangements are important to pupils and their parents and have played a significant part in the very good improvements evident in standards of work and behaviour over the past three years. Sanctions are generally effective and pupils know that they range from having their initials written on the board to being put 'on report' to the headteacher. Weekly meetings are arranged for staff to review the progress of pupils who have been on report and those with specific behavioural problems. The school does not hesitate to fully involve parents if their children are not meeting the expectations of good behaviour. Pupils are confident that the systems are used fairly, and the good behaviour seen in the school is evidence of the effectiveness of the procedures. Instances of exclusion have dropped dramatically over the past three years to a currently low level.

38. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. The last report highlighted the school's low attendance rates, despite its good measures. The school has continued to work very hard to improve the attendance of the small proportion of pupils with poor records and is committed to raising standards further. An attendance officer has been appointed who liaises very well with parents and the local community to promote good attendance. Good links with the local football club encourage and reward full attendance and the pupils enjoy this connection. Rewards are given to individuals and to classes for full attendance and a large display in the main hall lists the names of the pupils with the best attendance figures. The school takes prompt action on the first day of any pupil's unexplained absence and the very good knowledge the attendance officer has of individual families plays an important part in making this system work.

The school also works closely with the educational welfare officer who concentrates on the small number of pupils whose poor attendance is causing the greatest concern. Data from the school indicates that attendance rates are poor overall for the quite large group of pupils who join or leave the school at other than the usual times.

39. The school has thorough systems for checking the pupils' progress in the nursery and Reception classes and these ensure that staff are well aware of the children's learning successes and needs. Systems for checking pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics are well established throughout the school. The information provided is used very well to plan for future learning and to set targets for improvement. Individual pupils have a list of their targets and enjoy ticking them off as they are achieved. This enables both teachers and pupils to focus clearly on the next steps of learning. Pupils' attainments in science are checked through regular assessment tasks that provide information on where to focus support for individuals and groups of pupils. The school's very good improvements in national test results over the past three years is testimony to its success in tailoring its provision to meet the identified needs of pupils. The school has not yet implemented a clear system for assessment in the other subjects of the curriculum and this is an area for improvement identified in the school's development plan.

40. Assessments of pupils with special educational needs are carried out very carefully and staff are aware of pupils' targets, programmes or additional medical needs. Relationships between staff and pupils are good so that learning takes place in a supportive atmosphere. The school works well with external agencies and ensures that pupils' needs, as indicated on each Statement of Special Educational Need, are met very well. The 'listening service' offered by the teacher in charge of the 'Kiva Suite', or quiet room, has been welcomed by pupils who sometimes need a quiet place to unwind.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. The school has a sound partnership with parents, maintaining standards since the last inspection. There was a good response to the pre-inspection meeting and the parental questionnaire, indicating very strong support for the school. The parents are particularly pleased with the high expectations the school has for their children and the way in which pupils are helped to mature. They consider the teaching to be good and they are very comfortable about talking to the teachers. Their children are happy at school and enjoy their work. A small number of concerns were expressed about the range of activities available outside lessons, and how well informed the parents feel about the progress of their children. The inspectors agree with the positive views of the parents. They find that the school makes good provision for activities outside lessons and that these activities are generally well supported. The parents receive sufficient information about their children's progress and have good opportunities to talk to the staff.

42. The quality and amount of information provided for parents are satisfactory. A regular and popular newsletter informs them of forthcoming events and staff news. The newsletters also give details of the pupils' Achievement Awards and the parents value this information. The school prospectus is an informative booklet, which gives full details of the topics to be studied in all subjects through both key stages. The school has organised events to help parents understand the national literacy and numeracy strategies. Parents are offered valuable opportunities to discuss the learning targets and reviews of the pupils with special educational needs and the school works hard to keep parents fully informed about their progress. Particularly good support is provided for parents who have reading difficulties themselves. The pupils' annual reports are satisfactory overall, but include limited information on each pupil's progress, mainly providing general information about the topics that have been covered during the year. However, useful targets are generally set for the next year. The school is aware that some parents have found the reports too long and to contain an excessive amount of jargon. The inspectors agree with the views of the parents. Arrangements for the parents to meet the teachers are sound and two meetings are organised each year. Governors are available in school at these times and parents have the opportunity to talk with them about any concerns they have. Many parents take the opportunity to

speak with teachers at other times during the term if they have a particular worry or concern. Parents say that they feel very welcome in school.

43. The last report recognised the progress the school had made in developing the links with parents and identified that the next stage is to increase the parents' involvement in their children's education. The school is encouraging parents to become more involved through increased communication, including questionnaires seeking their views of the school and opportunities for involvement in setting the school's development plan. The small number of parents who regularly help in school receive guidance in advance and feel welcomed and valued by the staff. There is good support for social and fund raising events organised by the school, with concerts and plays being particularly well attended. The school has succeeded in encouraging more parents to ensure that their children attend regularly but realise there is still a way to go to achieve the desired levels. The school attendance officer works tirelessly to establish and build on good relationships with parents who need extra support.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. Leadership and management are good, overall. The clear educational direction provided by the headteacher and senior management team is very good and a very strong feature of the success of the school, showing good improvement since the last inspection. As the headteacher has become established in post, the impact of his work on the quality of the school has been incremental. His very strong and caring leadership has been the key to the school's change in direction in recent years. The senior management team is united in its vision for raising standards and taking the quality of the school forward. Since the last inspection, significant improvements have been achieved in the school's provision and the pupils' standards of attainment. The school's aims are very well reflected in its work.

45. The governing body has maintained a strong sense of purpose since the last inspection, despite significant changes in membership, and remains firmly focused on working with the school to raise standards. Governors are well informed and well organised; the good information the governing body receives from the headteacher and staff enables it to fulfil its duties. The effects of the good leadership are evident in the improving standards in teaching and learning and the high expectations of the pupils that are apparent in the school. A significant feature of the improving standards in school is the way the staff and governors collaborate very well together as a committed and hard working team.

46. Members of staff have responded well to opportunities to share in the leadership and management of the school. Responsibilities are carefully shared between staff, making the most of their experience and expertise. Co-ordinators of English and mathematics, of the provision for special educational needs and for the early years' section of the school have worked with strong commitment and persistence to analyse strengths and weaknesses in order to improve rapidly the school's provision. In response, all staff have worked as a well-co-ordinated team, striving to reach the aspirational targets set. The school's is now quite rightly in the process of extending the skills of the co-ordinators for other subjects to keep the school's provision moving forward.

47. The school's development plan is a comprehensive document that lays out clearly the way forward. Governors work in collaboration with the headteacher and staff to evaluate previous developments and to formulate future plans. Full discussions take place about the school's results in national tests and useful comparisons are made with other schools. The progress of individual pupils is carefully tracked by the headteacher to provide a clear picture of the school's success. Results are thoroughly analysed to enable a searching review of the action necessary.

48. The budget is well managed to support improvements and monitored closely through the year. The headteacher and governors ensure that the principles of best value are applied through the comparisons made with provision and outcomes in other schools, regular consultation with

pupils, parents and the local education authority, and the thorough and challenging review made of its own practice. Office routines are well organised and appropriate financial controls are in place. The recommendations from the most recent auditor's report have been suitably addressed. The good efficiency of the school office means that the headteacher and staff are able to focus on the main priorities of teaching and learning. Specific grants are sought and used efficiently and effectively. The headteacher is astute in obtaining additional funding, such as that linked to the emotional literacy programme, in order to improve the school's provision.

49. The school has an ample number of suitably qualified staff who contribute well to the standards achieved by pupils. Class sizes are generally small and teachers are well supported in meeting the challenging needs of many of the pupils. The school has put in place good procedures to assess the performance of teachers, based on a systematic programme for monitoring of their work and the consequent identification of areas for development. Teachers review their own performance and indicate aspects where they feel more training would be productive. There is a suitable induction programme for new teaching staff and lunchtime welfare supervisors. An effective combination of the skills of school staff and outside agencies provides good provision for the high number of pupils with special educational needs.

50. The very spacious building accommodates a wide range of designated rooms and facilities. For example, it has a well-appointed computer suite, an attractive early years' unit, and several areas where small groups can work away from the main class. The building is maintained and cleaned to a very high standard. Enhanced by attractive displays of pupils' work, it makes a very welcoming and stimulating environment for both pupils and adults. Extensive grounds and pitches are available for physical education. Hard-surfaced playgrounds are a good size but have few additional features such as seats or permanent play equipment.

51. Learning resources are satisfactory, overall, and good equipment is available for ICT, physical education and the nursery and Reception class. Many of the resources, in music, for example, have been in service for a number of years and a programme of renewal is appropriately underway.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. The governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (i) raise standards in mathematics for pupils in Year 2 by:
 - providing plentiful practical mathematical learning opportunities across the curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2;
[paragraphs 4, 6, 26, 81]
- (ii) raise standards in English for pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6 by:
 - establishing a diagnostic system for identifying areas for development in reading;
[paragraphs 5, 26, 76]
 - continuing to build on the good support system in place that adds structure to pupils' writing;
[paragraphs 5, 26, 72]
 - developing a whole-school approach to the teaching of spelling;
[paragraphs 5, 75]
 - ensuring that pupils apply the skills evident in handwriting practice to their independent writing;
[paragraphs 5, 75]
- (iii) raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT) by:
 - arranging for further training for staff to ensure that all have sufficient confidence and understanding to meet the needs of the age group;
[paragraphs 8, 20, 117]
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology in other subjects;
[paragraphs 20, 26, 112, 119, 135]
 - devising a system for assessing the pupils' progress;
[paragraph 118]
- (iv) raise standards in religious education by:
 - improving teachers' understanding of the subject;
[paragraphs 8, 129-135]
- (v) ensure that useful systems for assessing the pupils' progress and guiding teaching are available and used in all subjects;
[paragraphs 39, 100, 118, 124]
- (vi) continue to devise and implement effective and imaginative systems for improving the attendance of pupils identified as having poor records.
[paragraphs 16, 38]

In addition, the following less important area for development should be included in the action plan:

- extend the teachers' use of ICT for lesson planning to improve the efficiency of the system.
[paragraph 21]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	72
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	20	33	15	2	0	0
Percentage	3	27	46	21	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	9	228
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	140

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	88

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	61
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	37

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	3.9
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	17	20	37

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	8	14
	Girls	15	11	15
	Total	25	19	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	68 (66)	51 (51)	78 (80)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	12	13
	Girls	12	12	14
	Total	20	24	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	54 (40)	65 (51)	73 (77)
	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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	28	28	56

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	18	23
	Girls	18	22	24
	Total	35	40	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	63 (72)	71 (74)	84 (95)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	20	23
	Girls	21	21	25
	Total	38	41	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68 (62)	73 (74)	86 (92)
	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	197	39	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	5	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	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	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: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5
Average class size	21

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	299

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	9
Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	105
Number of pupils per FTE adult	7

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	763,535
Total expenditure	785,926
Expenditure per pupil	2,777
Balance brought forward from previous year	26,627
Balance carried forward to next year	4,236

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	246
Number of questionnaires returned	134

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	29	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	29	3	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	46	5	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	37	12	4	0
The teaching is good.	64	33	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	38	15	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	35	2	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	24	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	40	44	11	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	64	32	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	40	0	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	29	10	3	10

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

53. In the nursery, there are 17 children on roll, attending either the morning or the afternoon sessions. In the Reception class, there are 25 children, who are admitted gradually in the September after their fourth birthday. There have been significant alterations and improvements to the school to form an early years' unit over the past year and there are now three tastefully decorated areas, with good resources, that offer children a stimulating start to their school life. The small outside play area is used well. The school plans to develop this as an exciting, interesting place for children to play together and to enhance their learning.

54. The attainment of most children when they start school in the nursery is low in comparison with that of most children of three years of age, particularly in the areas of language and communication and personal and social skills. By the time they transfer to Year 1, the attainments of most children are still below the levels expected for their age in most areas of learning but most are on course to achieve the expected levels in physical and creative development. Boys and girls, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress because the teaching is never less than good and is usually very good. A wide range of stimulating activities is provided, showing good improvement since the last inspection and the prospect of a further rise in standards.

55. The strengths of the teaching are in developing the children's personal, social, literacy, and numeracy skills. The teachers' planning takes good account of the children's needs and identifies appropriate links with the National Curriculum. All staff have a very good understanding of the needs of children this age and what helps them to learn. Over the past year, staff have visited a number of other schools to find examples of good practice and have thoughtfully adjusted many of the ideas for use in their own setting. The sensible arrangement of the rooms to provide special bays for each of the areas of learning helps children to organise their own activities. For example, children say, "I'm going to the writing area," and know what they will do there. The use of the outside area is planned very carefully to provide a range of stimulating and enjoyable activities for all children. These are changed regularly to keep the children interested and learning successfully. There are good systems for the daily assessment of children's attainment. All staff are involved in the checking of children's needs and contribute to the tracking of progress from starting school. Parents are kept informed through informal discussions and parents' meetings. The school hopes that more parents will come in regularly when the toy library is open.

Personal, social and emotional development

56. Most children start school in the nursery with personal and social skills that are well below those found nationally. Children make very good progress and most are close to the levels expected nationally by the time they transfer to Year 1. Staff place a strong emphasis on the development of independence, working together, and a feeling of achievement. For example, children take their own photograph off their coat peg, place it on the notice board to show that they have arrived and, later, 'post' the photographs when they have a snack. From the earliest days in the nursery, routines are well established and children know there are rules to follow and clear expectations of behaviour. Adults' skilled interventions help children to learn to share and take turns, listen to others and follow instructions. They gain much by working and playing with children from the Reception class.

57. In the Reception class, children build well on progress made in the nursery. Children sit and participate in short whole class lessons because their concentration and ability to answer questions has improved. Children select activities and use resources independently. Very few children move swiftly from one activity to another without completing a task. Children work without direct

supervision in small groups, put up their hands when they have completed their shared task, and wait for the teacher to check what they have done. The very orderly routines and calm atmosphere established by the staff team help the children to understand what is required of them and develops their confidence and independence.

Communication, language and literacy

58. Children make very good progress because of the very good teaching and emphasis placed on the development of speaking and listening. Most children are unlikely to achieve the levels expected nationally by the time they transfer to Year 1, although the more able children will do so. As they start school in the nursery, many children use single words, nod or remain silent while only a few more confident children make longer responses. With consistent prompts from adults, some children develop a conversation, especially when working or playing with children from the Reception class. Regular contact with the older children stimulates play, imagination and conversation between children. Staff plan very creatively to develop early reading, writing and imaginative play because there are many new skills for children to learn. The children learn to make marks with pencils, pens and crayons and begin to distinguish between writing and drawing. Children form letters in their name and, because there are very good links between writing and reading, recognise their name when it is shown to them. They recognised the letter 'v', for example, when it was shown to them in a science activity. Staff read books well to children to engage their interest and use questions very skilfully to help them to understand stories and instructions. Adults insist on a response and this helps children to develop their thinking and speaking. Children enjoy looking at books.

59. Children make good progress in recognising letters and sounds in the Reception class because they are provided with a stimulating introduction to literacy. The more able children read simple books fluently and all children treat books with respect and enjoyment. One child can read a list of names fluently and most recognise their own and others' names. Learning the sounds of letters is fun because children listen to a tape with children's voices on it. They identify with the children's comments and remember words used well. Children are beginning to understand that sounds go together to build up words. They tried very hard to build up their words when they wrote a letter, with the staff providing timely help as necessary. Staff are skilled in providing an interesting activity, balanced with plentiful encouragement and support, but also with plenty of scope for the children to develop their independence. Children seize every opportunity to write on wipeable boards or paper in the writing area and, although more able children know all sounds from the alphabet, every child knows a few of them. Some groups work regularly with extra support from the teacher or a teaching assistant and this enables them to improve their skills well. Children talk about what they have learned in the lesson and this improves their speaking and listening.

Mathematical development

60. Children make very good progress because numeracy is taught very well through many practical tasks and games. Most are unlikely to achieve the expected level by the time they are five because of their low prior attainment. Staff plan very precisely because children's understanding of mathematical language is limited. Children learn about 'full' and 'empty' through enjoyable games of pouring water from one container to another. They could count 'one, two, three' with an adult as cups of water were transferred. They counted the number of (plastic) daffodils they had 'grown' in the sand tray and knew they needed one more to make two. In a well-managed lesson, children identified three basic shapes and matched them with objects. They painted within the shapes and made shape patterns. All of these activities successfully reinforced the names and properties of the shapes.

61. By the time the children go into the Reception class, they have gained an understanding of counting. As a result, they join in number rhymes enthusiastically, with support staff showing less able children how to put up one, two or three fingers. One got cubes to help a child who had difficulty with this task. Children can count up to ten and more able children count to 20. They can sort solid and flat shapes confidently. One child described a shape accurately to others in the group. A few more able children are writing addition sums and answering simple problems

accurately.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

62. Children achieve well in the nursery because staff work hard to attract their interest and curiosity. They stimulate interest through discussions with children as they show them items. For example, children are interested in growing flowers and seeing how flowers develop because of the links between a story, planting cress and beans, and looking at the flowers around the school. They sort dull and shiny pieces of material carefully, finding the shiny ones easily. Children smell vanilla and vinegar and most know both items begin with 'v'. Children use painting programs on the computer well and use the 'mouse' to change pictures on the screen with some help. Adults show them what to do and encourage them to follow any instructions.

63. In the Reception class, children make choices and follow plans to make models with a construction kit well. They write their name on the computer with help and 'click and drag' pictures across the screen to match numbers and toys. There are many opportunities for children to develop their thinking through planned play and exploration activities. For example, outside they have large bricks arranged in a pattern by a teacher. After exploring this thoroughly, a group of children planned thoughtfully how they could alter it to make it more challenging and interesting.

Physical development

64. Most children are likely to attain the expected levels by the time they transfer to Year 1. They are making good progress. In both the nursery and the Reception class, children make enthusiastic use of the space outside and move around confidently with large wheeled toys. They match actions to the words in songs increasingly accurately. Children in the nursery join with the Reception class for physical education lessons. By the time they transfer to Year 1, children change independently and discuss what they have done previously at the start of each lesson. They use space sensibly in the hall and know that they have to be quiet, look where they are going, and listen to any instructions. They follow the rules well. They run, walk, skip, and jog around the hall and try hard to think of sitting on the mats in different ways. Children work very hard in the lesson and a minimum of time is wasted because staff organise groups well to get out mats. Children from the nursery watch the children in the Reception class 'to make sure that what they are doing is correct'. By the time they transfer to Year 1, children use construction toys well. They model with play dough, using several tools, paint with brush or fingers, make models and collages. This helps them to increase their dexterity with other tools and scissors because of the support given and the interesting activities. Most have a good grip of pencils for writing in the Reception class.

Creative development

65. Children make good progress and achieve well because of the wide range of opportunities to develop skills. Most children are likely to be close to the expected levels by the time they transfer to Year 1. Children in both the nursery and the Reception class frequently work together. The teacher shows children how to make a pastel colouring of flowers and leaves. They produce very good pastels of tulips. Children in the nursery enjoy painting. A child in Reception goes to get a book to find a picture of an aeroplane and then shows a younger child how to prop up the book so he can do the same. In the Reception class, children mix colours well and paint with deliberation and care. They draw features on their pictures of people to give them character and life.

66. Children use glue spreaders and tape confidently to fix their models together. They roll and cut play dough into shapes with deliberation, sharing the soft dough well. Children enjoy the imaginative areas, where they are 'teachers' or cook the dinner. These encourage language development and purposeful play. Children enjoy singing and playing instruments. In a science assessment, nearly everyone gave a drum as an example of something that makes a noise.

ENGLISH

67. By the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, pupils' attainment is below the national average, overall. The 2002, test results show that standards are above the average for similar schools and on an upward trend. The school is well focused on raising standards but faces a considerable challenge due to underachievement identified in the past and the high number of pupils with special educational needs. The good quality of teaching is a significant factor in the improving trends and the good progress from a low base made by most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and the small number for whom English is an additional language. Those joining the school at a later stage than usual make good progress, overall, although few reach high levels of attainment. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection in 2001 and very good improvements are evident over the past four years.

68. The quality of teaching and learning is never less than satisfactory, usually good and sometimes very good. Teachers make effective use of the national literacy strategy in order to plan lessons and to ensure that pupils build on what has gone before. Pupils are allocated to classes in English according to their previous attainment and this means that teachers are able to target work more easily to the pupils' specific needs. The school makes good use of established assessment systems to gauge pupils' progress and to guide its planning. Teachers have high expectations for pupils, set ambitious targets for learning and this encourages pupils to improve their performance. The school is careful to reward good achievement. This helps to focus the pupils' concentration and to improve their understanding of their own successes.

69. Most pupils transfer to Year 1 with lower than average skills in speaking and listening. Although teachers provide many opportunities for the development of these skills through organising discussions that involve the whole class, and through working in pairs and small groups in lessons, standards overall are lower than average by the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. However, most pupils make at least good progress and standards in the school are improving. Because relationships are very good, most pupils are confident to contribute to discussions. Pupils in Year 2, for example, listen carefully to stories and are eager to join the discussion with the teacher because they know that their comments are valued. Although most pupils use limited phrases and sentences, they show an increasing ability to use a range of alternative words to enlarge on those used in the text. Higher attaining pupils are confident in discussing events and organise their explanations carefully. As they get older, pupils show increasing confidence in speaking to teachers, other pupils and visitors because they feel confident that what they have to say will be respected. For example, although lower attaining pupils in Year 6 use a limited vocabulary and relatively simple phrases, they are confident in discussing the content of their reading books. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 take advantage of opportunities to listen intently and use their developing vocabularies well in discussions with other pupils about, for example, how they might improve their writing.

70. Although overall standards in reading are not yet high enough, most pupils in Years 1 and 2 confidently use a range of strategies, such as sounding out, using picture clues and reading on, in order to make sense of unfamiliar words. This is because teachers have a good understanding of how to teach the basic skills. The expression the pupils use and the tone of their voice show their understanding of their reading. In Year 2, for example, higher attaining pupils confidently used grammar and punctuation in order to read expressively because the teacher clearly indicated how these are linked. Pupils extend their comprehension skills because the teachers encourage them to predict story endings. However, lower attaining pupils read hesitantly and have difficulty with simple words.

71. The teachers of pupils in Years 3 to 6 generally show a good understanding of the texts selected for lessons and the strategies that are used by authors to make stories detailed and interesting. This enables them to extend the pupils' comprehension well and their skills in 'reading

between the lines'. In Year 6, for example, because the teacher used very clear explanations and illustrations and showed high expectations, higher attaining pupils worked hard and rigorously to identify crucial features in a text. They recognised strategies used by the author to build tension in the reader, and referred confidently to detail from the story to justify their views. Lower attaining pupils receive sufficient help during lessons to make good progress, sometimes from a very low base. For example, in Year 4, in work on character descriptions, lower attaining pupils received help from the teacher because their reading was hesitant and their comprehension of text less clear. As pupils progress through the school, teachers ensure that most pupils increase their understanding of how to use index, contents and glossaries in locating information in books. Pupils who have a preference for factual books are able to focus on them as a resource for individual reading. This is helping boys, in particular, to extend their skills in reading through building on their own interests. A pupil in Year 3, for example, was very keen to discuss the fate of King Harold at the Battle of Hastings, as illustrated on the Bayeux Tapestry. However, among older pupils, there are inconsistencies in their skills in using the library as part of their research.

72. The school has worked hard over the past three years to improve the quality of pupils' writing. Throughout the school, pupils are guided and supported well when they are writing. Younger pupils are sensibly provided with reminders about letter sounds and older pupils are given a helpful framework on paper to help them to plan out their writing. Reminders are printed down the side of their writing scripts, indicating strategies that will improve the quality and interest of their work. This close guidance is gradually improving standards and the structure, content and vitality of pupils' writing are improving through the school. Children in the Reception class, for example, are achieving more this year than the pupils did in Year 1 last year and similar improvements are evident at other stages in the school.

73. Teachers have improved their understanding of the next steps required at each level of learning in writing. They generally have high expectations of the pupils and set ambitious targets. This encourages pupils to work increasingly hard and to give of their best. Pupils in Year 1, for example, learn to write captions, labels and an increasing number of sentences and by Year 2, higher attaining pupils use speech marks accurately and include interesting vocabularies in their descriptions of buildings. Teachers know the pupils' stages of learning well and challenge and reward them at appropriate levels. They ensure that pupils write for a suitable range of purposes and audiences to broaden and consolidate their skills. In the Year 6 class for lower attaining pupils, for example, the teacher prepared work which was well suited to their needs so that they were able to extend their note taking skills, basing their work on a text linked to their work in history. The small size of the group meant that pupils received ample individual attention. The school finds many opportunities for pupils who need extra help to meet individually or in small groups with teachers and support staff.

74. Teachers plan well, using the national literacy strategy efficiently, and share the planning objectives with pupils to help them to understand what they are to learn. They make close links with texts to illustrate good examples of writing. Pupils in Year 5, for instance, improved their understanding of how to describe the setting for a legend because the teacher made good use of the legend of Odysseus as an illustration. In Year 6, higher attaining pupils were helped to reach high standards by very effectively building up tension through good description of unfolding events in their story writing. This was because the teacher presented the lesson in a lively and interesting way and shared the lesson objectives well with pupils so that they clearly understood what was expected of them. The pupils' learning was enhanced when the teacher used his good subject knowledge to remind pupils to use strategies such as short sentences, metaphors and similes to give their work dramatic impact.

75. By the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, most higher attaining pupils spell a suitable range of increasingly difficult words accurately. In contrast, the spelling of most pupils is generally weak. Pupils are given spellings regularly to learn and most teachers work hard to make them aware of spelling patterns. However, the school does not have a consistent approach to the teaching of spelling to ensure good continuity and to help pupils to build securely on what has gone before. This is an area for development, as is the standard of pupils' handwriting. Most pupils produce

increasingly clear, fluent and joined handwriting in their handwriting practice books. However, teachers do not sufficiently insist that all pupils transfer their handwriting skills from their handwriting books to their independent writing and consequently, it is often poorly presented. When teachers write comments in pupils' books or write for pupils as a whole class, the models of handwriting they provide are not consistently good in all classes.

76. The school provides well for pupils with specific learning difficulties and, where appropriate, individual education plans clearly outline suitable and manageable targets for improvement. The small number of pupils using English as an additional language is given good support and, sometimes, the services of a translator to enable them to make good progress. The school efficiently encompasses the skills of teaching assistants and a wide range of additional support, such as reading partnerships and early literacy support schemes, in order to promote pupils' achievement. Support staff give freely of their time and their good interest in their work encourages pupils to succeed. The school does not have a consistent system for checking and identifying individual strengths and weaknesses in reading, however, to lead the provision of appropriate help and this is an area for development.

77. During lessons, teachers keep a close check on pupils' progress in order to guide pupils to the next steps. They mark pupils' work regularly and provide comments that are supportive and helpful in moving pupils forward. In Year 2, for example, the teacher commented: "Excellent. You have included all the information." In Year 6, the teacher advised: "More emotion is needed in a diary." Homework, particularly for the pupils in Year 6, is well organised, regular and usefully extends pupils' learning in class.

78. The co-ordinator leads the subject well and has worked successfully to support staff and pupils in raising standards. She reviews the teachers' planning, checks the quality of teaching and learning in lessons, and samples pupils' work in order to keep in touch with the standards. She has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and learning and clear ideas of how the subject is to develop in order to raise standards further.

MATHEMATICS

79. Standards are average in Year 6 but below average in Year 2. The school has put much effort into raising standards over the past two years and the hard work is paying off. There have been good improvements in teaching since the last inspection. The achievement of most pupils is good, many of whom enter Year 1 with limited mathematical skills.

80. The main reason for the success in mathematics is the very good leadership and management of the subject. The school has put time, resources and training into striving for improvement. Staff have analysed the results of tests to identify areas of strength and weakness and made necessary changes. Pupils less likely to reach the required standard have been targeted for extra support to give them the best chance of success. Teachers have benefited from their training in the subject and teaching is now consistently good, with a significant proportion of very good teaching. The focus of training has been on teaching the skills of number and place value, on the use of different strategies for solving number problems, and on the correct use of mathematical language. As a result, standards in these aspects of the subject are at least average by the end of Year 6.

81. By Year 2, pupils have learnt the word 'strategy' and know that there are several ways of arriving at a correct solution to a calculation. Almost all pupils work confidently with numbers up to 20, finding different ways of adding and subtracting by counting forwards and backwards on a number line (jumping like frogs!), working calculations out in their heads and checking their results by using their fingers. Lower attaining pupils use the same range of strategies but with smaller numbers. Higher attaining pupils are confident in working with numbers to 100. They describe the mental strategies they use for subtracting two digit numbers, for example, by rounding a nine up to 10, then subtracting one at a later stage, and can make sensible estimates of up to 100 small

objects when working practically. Pupils are confident with their number work because teachers constantly ask them to explain their thinking, praise them for their use of correct vocabulary and find practical ways of teaching number skills. Teachers are following the latest national guidance for practising calculations through useful games and other practical activities and, combined with improvements in attainment in the Reception class, standards are likely to move towards nationally expected levels by the end of Year 2. In addition, the teachers' assessments have indicated that the pupils' use of mathematical language is an area for improvement and this is being addressed.

82. In Years 3 to 6, pupils are taught in classes with others of similar levels of attainment. Teachers keep careful records of individual progress and use the information to identify precisely what each class needs to learn next. Teachers with advanced expertise in the subject are used very well to teach particular groups to help them reach the next level of attainment. An excellent example of this was seen in Year 4, where the teacher guided a group of higher attaining pupils through the investigation of a 'magic square'. Skilful questioning challenged the pupils to think very hard about the relationships between the numbers. There were high levels of excitement as pupils discovered the links and very good co-operation as pairs of pupils discussed their work together. By Year 6, as a result of frequent and regular practice, all pupils have a good range of mental and written strategies for calculating the four rules of number. Higher attaining pupils can use these to good effect when working with numbers greater than 1000 to two places of decimals. Lower attaining pupils can apply their problem solving skills to calculate fractions and percentages of four digit numbers but are less secure with larger numbers.

83. Teaching is successful throughout the school because lessons are well planned to reflect the national guidance for the subject. Teachers make clear what pupils should learn by the end of the lesson and move lessons on at a brisk pace. Teaching is particularly effective when teachers plan relevant practical activities so that pupils take a full and active part in the lesson. In a lesson in Year 1, pupils learnt to identify three-dimensional shapes by sorting examples into hoops according to their properties. They decided, for example, whether they had corners or not, whether they would roll or whether they could be built on. Pupils worked together well and maintained interest in their tasks. There is less evidence of practical work in Years 3 to 6, but teachers recognise the importance of teaching pupils to think mathematically by carrying out investigations into numbers and patterns, and examples of such work are on display around the school. Where teaching utilises information and communication resources, as was seen in a lesson in Year 3, pupils show great interest and their learning is extended well. Shape, space and measure are taught well throughout the school and pupils learn how to use, read and write standard metric units, such as grams and kilograms. There is less evidence for the systematic teaching of handling data and teachers do not generally make enough use of computers to help pupils learn how to represent and interpret data through charts, graphs and pictograms.

84. Teachers make good provision for pupils with particular difficulties or special educational needs and this helps them to achieve well. Often they receive additional support from classroom assistants who work with them to help them take full part in the lesson. Classroom assistants are good at keeping checks on pupils who have a tendency to misbehave and ensure they cause little disruption to other pupils. In a small proportion of lessons where behaviour is not managed as well, progress is slowed because the teacher allows too much chatter and the pupils' learning loses pace.

85. The school's improvements in mathematics have justified all the hard work that has been invested in the subject. The school is well placed to raise standards further by planning more opportunities for younger pupils to learn through play and for older pupils to apply their mathematics to real life problems in other subjects such as geography and history.

SCIENCE

86. By the end of Year 6, attainment is in line with the national average. Pupils' achievement is good, overall, and sometimes very good. The pupils' knowledge and understanding in the subject

are well extended and an average number of pupils exceed the national level for their age. By the end of Year 2, attainment is average for the majority of pupils but none attains at a higher level. Nonetheless, pupils' achievement is good, overall, bearing in mind their below average starting point. Good improvements have been made to the teaching since the last inspection, building on the strengths identified in the school's provision for practical work.

87. The quality of teaching is good, overall, but ranges from satisfactory to excellent. Teaching is strongest in Year 6, where it is very good, overall, and sometimes excellent. A significant factor in the pupils' good achievement is the school's commitment to planning for pupils to learn as much as possible through scientific investigation. This is complemented in most classes by teachers' good subject knowledge and their ability to question pupils thoroughly. Despite the pupils' generally lower than average speaking skills, where teaching is good or better, thorough, probing questioning techniques help pupils to make good progress. The use of scientific explanations and vocabulary is encouraged and modelled well by most teachers and this significantly enhances learning. In Year 6, for example, teachers engaged the pupils in a dialogue of questions throughout the lesson so that the pupils' understanding of solutions was extended and refined. In the best lessons, in addition to good subject knowledge, the teacher's organisation is very efficient; the lesson runs smoothly, no time is wasted and pupils work rigorously throughout. Teachers plan together and this enables them to share their understanding and to make sure that pupils in the same year group have the same curriculum. Opportunities are missed, however, to build on this good planning by using computer technology to store and update lesson notes. Good liaison between teachers means that assessments are passed on between classes to enable new work to build successfully on previous learning. The outcomes of national tests are closely analysed and used to modify the curriculum and to target groups for improvements in understanding.

88. By Year 6, most pupils have a very clear understanding of how to conduct fair scientific investigations. In an excellent lesson in Year 6, discussions as a whole class prepared pupils extremely well for their investigational work. Previous work on solids, liquids and gases was swiftly but thoroughly explored. Key vocabulary, such as soluble, insoluble, dissolve and solution, was clearly defined. Vocabulary cards on display reinforced this work well and were referred to constantly throughout the lesson. The teacher was insistent on the pupils' correct use of scientific terminology. In Years 3 and 4, where pupils investigated the effects of cooling liquids and solid materials from room temperature to freezing point, good teaching helped the pupils to realise for themselves the importance of changing only one variable, the temperature, during investigational work. A dramatisation of the movement of particles when materials are heated stuck in pupils' minds and helped them to understand 'when a material is a solid, the particles don't move'. When teaching is satisfactory but not good, the teacher's less secure subject knowledge limits pupils' understanding. In Years 1 and 2, the commitment to finding out through observation and investigation is not as strong and some opportunities are missed. For example, when learning about healthy eating, pupils worked largely with pictures of food, missing opportunities to examine at first hand the characteristics of a variety of the food that keeps us healthy.

89. Throughout the school, the teachers' presentation of work in lively and relevant ways helps to engage the pupils' interest and encourages them to concentrate and work enthusiastically. For example, in Year 5, pupils were keen to explain how they had found out about the apparent movement of the sun through shining a torch on a globe. In Years 3 and 4, pupils were helped to understand the separation of particles in a solid to form a liquid by acting out the melting of wax as a candle is lit. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learned how to make a bulb light up and then made a lighthouse to demonstrate its possible uses. Teachers make scientific work relevant by forging links with everyday life, such as when pupils in Year 6 were reminded of the reaction of coffee granules to hot water and the effects of stirring or not stirring sugar into a cup of tea. Other subjects, such as design and technology and health education, are suitably linked through timely planning of the curriculum. However, links with ICT are limited and present an area for development.

90. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because teachers provide them with additional help and present them with work which is suited to their needs. In Year 6, for example, a support teacher worked with these pupils, allowing the class teacher to focus on the average and higher attaining pupils. In Year 3, a pupil with English as an additional language was helped to understand an investigation through the availability of translation

and questioning in his home language.

91. Teachers generally extend higher attaining pupils suitably through specific questioning and higher expectations. In Year 6, pupils are grouped according to their attainment in some lessons and this helps the more able pupils to work together to extend their skills. In other lessons, mixed ability groups ensure that higher attaining pupils are given the opportunity to promote discussions. In Years 1 and 2, higher achieving pupils were expected to read instructions and questions independently and to write up their responses accurately. Good relationships mean that almost all pupils are confident to discuss their findings with the teacher, support staff and other pupils because they know that their contributions will be valued. Teachers generally manage pupils well so that most pupils behave well, work hard and use equipment and materials sensibly.

92. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and generally provide useful comments to help pupils to improve their work. In most classes, there is a useful balance between following the teacher's lead on recording investigations and presenting explanations and results in the pupils' own way. Pupils are very familiar with using tables for recording purposes but are less familiar with graphs.

93. The co-ordinator is new to the role but has good subject knowledge and is working to organise the subject and to support staff increasingly well. Plans are in place for him to monitor samples of the pupils' written work, and to analyse assessments in order to identify areas for improvement. At present, the standards owe much to the skills of the class teachers in Year 6. There are sufficient resources overall but some shortages that restrict the learning within experimental work, such as the lack of a suitable number of calibrated beakers.

ART AND DESIGN

94. Attainment exceeds national expectations, overall, both by Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils make good progress and generally achieve well. Staff and pupils show a good interest in the subject, a good range of work is planned and there are high expectations for success. The above average standards reported in the inspection in 2001 have been maintained.

95. Due to timetable arrangements that alternate art and design with design and technology each half term, no lessons were observed. A review of pupils' past work indicates that the teaching of skills and techniques is good, overall, and sometimes very good.

96. By Year 2, the pupils are able to control a range of media to a level of attainment that is a little above average. Their work includes careful, well-controlled paintings, showing detailed observations of flowers. The range of work includes fabric dyeing, collage with papers and fabrics, and imaginative compositions, such as superimposing a painted figure on a colour-designed background.

97. By Year 6, pupils' experience has broadened well and examples of their work show good pencil control with a confident use of a variety of shading techniques. In discussion, pupils in Year 6 described completing a study of still life by using a range of different pencils, chalks and pastels. Compositions for study were compiled and drawn from different angles. One pupil commented that the different angles gave different light to the objects under observation and this was challenging to represent. Another explained how the different shape and depth of a bowl could be represented effectively by spacing the lines of shading differently on different parts of its surface. A viewfinder had been used to isolate parts of the composition for further study. Other examples of work include three-dimensional containers made from papier-mâché, each made to individual design and finished to a good level, showing a good awareness of colour. A group of pupils in Year 6 produced a work of high standard in the Batik style, based on a wax design on fabric, with coloured dye added.

98. Suitable attention is given to the work of famous artists. For example, using a computer graphics program, pupils in Year 2 produced work in the style of Mondrian. Pupils in Year 6 can describe the characteristics of the work of Van Gogh, Picasso and Seurat. However, most are linked to the European tradition with few examples of work from female artists or from other continents. Pupils contribute to a local annual art competition and are very pleased to discuss their

work. Occasional visits are made to art galleries in the vicinity to extend the pupils' learning. School performances for parents give the pupils the opportunity to design and make stage sets.

99. Pupils with a particular talent are helped to achieve well and some examples of work of very high quality are included within the school's portfolio of work. A pupil with special educational needs showing a specific interest in origami was enabled to extend his skills very well and to provide an informative display of his work.

100. The co-ordinator provides a good and gives advice and guidance to colleagues on developing skills and techniques. There are no procedures in place to assess the pupils' work but the co-ordinator is compiling a useful collection of work to provide guidance on the standards of work expected as pupils progress through the school. Plans are in hand for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching and learning in lessons within the next school year to help her to develop a full understanding of standards in the subject and to lead further improvements.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

101. Attainment in both Year 2 and Year 6 is in line with national expectations. Achievement is generally good and most pupils make good progress because the quality of teaching is good.

102. Most pupils develop a sound understanding of the designing, planning and making process. For example, pupils in Year 2 carefully produced designs for sculptures and puppets, including labelled sketches and descriptions of materials to be used. They produced carefully finished puppets, and well decorated, designed and finished fabric examples of Joseph's coat of many colours. Teachers plan work that is relevant and has a clear purpose. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 designed and made model playground equipment and made smoothly functioning levers and slide mechanisms in moving picture cards. Because teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, they use clear explanations and challenge pupils to extend their skills. For example, pupils in Year 4 used pneumatics in their work on moving monsters. In Year 3, because the teacher provided clear exemplar sketches and a well-organised supply of torches, pupils produced well-finished 'exploded' and annotated sketches of models for their own torches. By Year 6, pupils develop their skills further in completing detailed designs and plans and in making well considered and finished children's games. However, opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work are less well developed.

103. Teachers establish useful links with other subjects in order to extend pupils' understanding of designing and making, and to extend learning in the other subject. In work on disassembling and designing torches, pupils in Year 3, for example, used their scientific knowledge about electrical circuits. In Year 6, during work on the designing and making of musical instruments, the teacher referred pupils appropriately to work in music. Because teachers usually manage pupils well and relationships are good, pupils generally behave well and collaborate effectively, which further enhances their learning. Pupils in Year 6 moved smoothly into independent groups when they were challenged to work together to design a musical instrument. Teachers ensure that pupils have experience of a sound range of materials and tools. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 produced paper quills, used cutting and sewing and worked on construction kits. In Year 3, pupils made cakes as part of their work on food technology and in Year 5, pupils used cotton and fabric for making slippers. Older pupils know how to cut wood and strengthen joints using triangles and diagonals. Few opportunities are found to incorporate computer programs to extend pupils work in design.

104. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the requirements for the subject. Her next steps are to build on the success achieved in the subject through establishing arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work and the collection of a portfolio of examples, to establish the quality of work expected at each level of the school.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

105. Pupils' attainment in Year 2 and Year 6 in geography and history is very close to national expectations. Standards have improved over the last three years because of the implementation of new guidelines for staff and better planning. Teaching is good and most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress and achieve well in both subjects, making up for the low priority given to the subjects while the school focused strongly on literacy and numeracy.

106. In geography, pupils in Year 1 and 2 develop a good understanding of the physical and human features of the Isle of Struay. They understand that many items have to be brought to the island and that people and goods go by ferry to the mainland. Pupils have a list of geographical words associated with their topic and are using these in their writing. More able pupils write about items brought to the island and how people travel around it. Less able pupils put labels on a map with adult support. Most pupils remember details well.

107. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have a good understanding of where Pakistan and the United Kingdom are on a world map. They 'take a trip' around Miandam, labelling the places they see on the route. The teacher reads the route out for Year 3 pupils and they listen well so that labels are placed on the plan correctly. Most of the pupils in Year 4 work in pairs to follow the route themselves and work out where the labels go. They discuss possibilities before making their decisions and complete a challenging task well. Pupils write about people and events in photographs of Pakistan and some think they would like to live there because they would like to climb the mountains, which look so beautiful.

108. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 know how to use a range of maps and that some are more suitable for finding particular information for example, population or climate. Teachers make use of the pupils' interest in sport to develop their skills in geography. Pupils locate the countries involved in the Cricket World Cup on maps enthusiastically and search for information in books and on the Internet about one of the countries. Pupils look with interest at the list of teams in the Premiership and place these towns accurately on their maps of Britain before working out the distances between the towns. At the end of the lesson, pupils are surprised to see how much they have learned through this activity. They use co-ordinates very confidently to find tourist attractions in Blackpool. More able pupils use aerial photographs and local maps with a grid efficiently to create their own tourist map. Less able pupils locate their own homes, the school and local landmarks on aerial photographs with great enthusiasm.

109. In history, more able pupils in Year 1 and 2 write neatly about famous people. They recall many interesting facts about George Stephenson, Mary Seacole and Grace Darling and write thoughtfully about Remembrance Day, using a list of suitable words to help them. Less able pupils order sentences about famous people or dictate their answers to an adult. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 start each topic with statements about what they know about the people to be studied and what they want to know. As part of their 'Romans' topic, they have a specialist visitor in school and dress up as Romans, greatly enhancing their knowledge of the Roman way of life through the experiences of the day. They see clear differences between Roman times and today. Pupils use information from books and the Internet well to write about the Anglo-Saxons. In Years 5 and 6, pupils look at many aspects of Victorian life. Some are helped to visualise the experiences of a soldier at the front through pretending to be survivors of the Charge of the Light Brigade, writing letters home. All produce good editorials on the Great Exhibition, using their research findings effectively. Studies of exploration in Tudor times gives pupils an opportunity to practise map reading on old and current maps. Most pupils find this difficult initially but enjoy learning to find out from a variety of sources of evidence.

110. Teaching and learning in geography and history are good, overall. Lessons are interesting and include practical activities that are designed to stimulate curiosity and provide a range of experiences. Teachers work hard to build systematically on pupils' skills and understanding. They

make good use of specific geographic vocabulary and words which pupils need in their writing in history. Any written work is matched well to pupils' abilities. Teachers ask open-ended questions and try to extend pupils' answers to check their understanding.

111. Most pupils enjoy the activities in lessons in both subjects although it sometimes takes time for them to settle down to work. Pupils frequently forget to take turns in listening and speaking because they are keen to offer their opinion. In one class, they groaned when the teacher told them it was the end of lesson because they had become very interested in their tasks.

112. The co-ordinator has successfully worked to extend the quality of teaching well in both subjects by enriching the curriculum through interesting and profitable activities, such as role-play. Work in history, particularly, is improving though an increasing focus on pupils' finding out for themselves from a variety of sources of evidence. There are good guidelines for the subjects but the school's recent focus on literacy and numeracy means that it has sometimes not covered topics in sufficient depth. The situation is now being resolved and useful links are being made with teaching in literacy, numeracy and ICT. The school uses the area well for local studies in both history and geography.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

113. The school has worked hard over the past two years to improve the provision for the subject and standards are rising rapidly as a result. Standards are now average by Year 2 and close to average by Year 6. This represents good achievement for these pupils, many of whom do not have access to computers at home, and good improvement since the previous inspection.

114. There are three main reasons for the good improvement. The subject is well managed by an experienced co-ordinator, a scheme of work has been introduced that ensures that all strands of the subject are covered and the school has installed a new computer suite so that pupils can be taught as a class. This enables them to make rapid progress in the development of key skills such as word processing and picture making, and in the use of editing tools to amend and refine their work.

115. The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent through the school, however, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching is sound overall. It is consistently good in Years 1 and 2 and there are pockets of very good teaching in Years 3 to 6. Teachers and classroom assistants have received recent training in the subject and some have considerable expertise. Teachers make good use of the computer suite and the interactive white board to teach skills to the whole class at once. This enables the teacher and teaching assistants to move around the class and give individual help so that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make progress in the lesson. Some teachers use the interactive whiteboard to good effect in other lessons, such as mathematics.

116. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 are establishing sound basic computer skills. By Year 2, pupils know how to log on to computer programs independently. They use their word processing skills to type simple captions correctly, such as when they designed greetings cards. They can use drawing and editing tools to create coloured pictures linked to their work on famous artists. Pupils' skills were demonstrated clearly in colourful designs in the style of the artist Mondrian, which they had filled with 'hot and cold' colours. Higher attaining pupils worked on their pictures independently using the full range of tools and effects available and lower attaining pupils produced simple pictures with adult guidance.

117. Teaching is less consistent in Years 3 to 6, where the confidence and skill of staff varies. Although all staff have received suitable training, it is taking more time to teach at the level expected of the older pupils. Word processing skills develop suitably in Years 3 to 6 and, by Year 6, most pupils can use desktop publishing programs to design and produce simple newsletters. They experiment with layout, colour and fonts to create visually attractive designs and import pictures

from different sources to illustrate their work. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6, working on accounts of their school's 'Bad Hair Day', used the computer program well to personalise their headlines and used different fonts and bold, italic and underlined text to hold the reader's interest. Most pupils produced colourful leaflets independently although some lower attaining pupils needed a lot of guidance to keep them focused on the task. Skills in other aspects of the subject, such as the use of spreadsheets for data handling, are not developed as quickly because some teachers lack expertise themselves.

118. In the best lessons, teachers give very clear instructions, demonstrate the skill to be learnt on the white board and set time deadlines so that the lesson moves on at a brisk pace. Pupils enjoy working at their tasks in pairs and these opportunities to work together and help each other make a positive contribution to pupils' personal development. They behave well and show interest in their work. In lessons where the pace of learning is slow, it is because the teacher is not well enough prepared for the lesson and cannot sort out problems when they arise. Sometimes higher attaining pupils use time unproductively, practising skills they have already mastered, because the school does not yet have an effective system for assessment in place. The scheme of work makes clear what pupils should know by the end of each year and this helps teachers in Years 1 and 2 pitch their lessons at the right level. However, because the subject has not been taught and assessed systematically in the past, teachers of older pupils are not always sure what pupils can do and what they cannot. Assessment systems are still not in place to provide a clear focus for teaching and learning. Teaching and learning are occasionally unsatisfactory due to weaknesses in preparation for the lesson and difficulties with operating resources, which significantly reduce pupils' opportunities for learning.

119. Teachers are gradually improving the way they use ICT to contribute to learning in other subjects. Pupils use the computer to support work on shape, pattern and symmetry in maths, for example. Teachers use a number of revision programs to help older pupils prepare for national tests and younger pupils use simple programs to help them learn their sounds and to practise their writing. There is scope for pupils to make more use of the Internet as a tool for research and for older pupils to use multi-media presentations to present their work to an audience. The subject co-ordinator has a good understanding of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses in the subject and the school is well placed to continue its rapid improvement.

MUSIC

120. Insufficient evidence was available to make an overall judgement on the full range of music skills for pupils in Year 6 but it is evident that the quality of singing is satisfactory. For pupils in Year 2, standards meet expectations nationally for the age group. Since the last inspection, the school's own audit has indicated that standards are not consistently of a high enough standard through the school and, consequently, music has become a priority for development.

121. For the pupils in Years 1 and 2, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils enjoy singing and by Year 2, they sing in tune and keep a steady rhythm. In the lessons observed, pupils worked hard to follow the pitch of a tune and to learn to respond, not only to the music, but also to symbols representing higher or lower notes. Pupils raised and lowered their hands to show that they could identify the changes in the pitch of the music. Familiar songs and tunes were greeted with enthusiasm. Pupils were able to recognise symbols that indicated a change in pitch and some could follow the pattern on the xylophone or glockenspiel. The friendly relationships with the teachers encourage the pupils to take part and to do their best. Pupils are learning to remember the names of instruments and are helped by the daily music in school assembly where the pupils' are encouraged to identify orchestral instruments.

122. In lessons in Years 3 to 6, teachers are not always secure in their subject knowledge and this limits the guidance they can give to improve the pupils' performance. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, overall. In Year 3, pupils learn to identify the notes that comprise the

pentatonic scale and take turns to play the tunes, keep the rhythm and sing the accompanying songs. They find the tasks difficult but the enthusiasm of the teacher encourages them to persist until satisfactory progress is made. The limited subject knowledge of the teacher means that the pupils' performance is not improved as far as it could be, for example, by devising a more pleasing sound than beating out the rhythm on the tabletops. In lessons in Years 5 and 6, the quality of teaching and learning varied between satisfactory and unsatisfactory. In both lessons, pupils were set the task of composing their own lyrics to provide a further verse to an African freedom song. The unit was not linked to lessons in personal and social education and in the unsatisfactory lesson, a high proportion of the time was spent on quickly explaining the background to the song, which did not give this important and sensitive subject full justice. Where teaching was satisfactory, there was enough discussion of the content, nature and pattern of the song, to extend the pupils' understanding and enable each group to produce a new verse. Pupils understood the reference to the 'strong uprising', with one pupil commenting that 'If people are hurting them, they will have to have strength to stand up for themselves'. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, pupils' restless behaviour and lack of concentrated effort eclipsed the lesson and too little time was spent improving composition and performance. In addition, problems with controlling the sound equipment limited the pace and efficiency of the teaching significantly. An unsatisfactory element on both lessons was the lack of suitable resources to allow the pupils to practise their lyrics to the music without singing over the words of another singer. No evidence was available of instrumental composition but pupils in one of the Year 6 classes say they have recently begun this work.

123. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to practise and appreciate music during school assembly times. The headteacher or the music co-ordinator leads a brief but useful discussion of the chosen music for the week and the pupils' attention is drawn to significant features. When listening to 'Carnival of the Animals', pupils identified some of the different instruments that could be heard and animals they might be representing. The singing in school assemblies reaches a satisfactory standard for the pupils' ages and is enhanced by the guitar accompaniment of the teacher. Pupils who choose to take part in the choir have the opportunity to extend their singing skills and to perform at local events. Eight pupils have elected to learn to play a brass instrument. Recorder lessons are made available during each summer term. Music makes a satisfactory contribution, overall, to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

124. The co-ordinator is a trained musician and provides useful information for other teachers within the selection and planning of lessons in the subject. She is aware that the pupils' creative music skills need to improve and plans are in hand to enable her to monitor teaching and learning in lessons to decide on an appropriate training programme. There is no assessment system in place and this is an area for development. Resources are broadly adequate but many are old and ready for renewal. A start has been made on the renewal programme and the school has recently acquired new xylophones and glockenspiels.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

125. By the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, standards are in line with national expectations. Most pupils achieve well because the overall quality of teaching is good. This is enhanced by teachers' clear lesson planning and their use of sequential schemes of work that enable pupils to build securely on work that has gone before.

126. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and they ensure that pupils warm up their muscles thoroughly at the beginning of lessons and cool down appropriately at the end. Most pupils understand the need for these activities because teachers explain their importance and, as in a games lesson in Year 6, show that they understand established clear routines and know what is expected. Teachers generally observe pupils closely and help pupils to reflect on ways they might improve their performance. For example, in Year 2, pupils improved the quality of their balancing and jumping because the teacher made good use of pupils' demonstrations as a basis for discussion on how they might improve. This was further enhanced by the teacher's high

expectations, insisting on well considered starting positions and encouraging pupils to make good use of the space available.

127. Teachers generally manage pupils well so that they behave well and exercise safely. Occasionally when teachers do not sufficiently ensure that pupils are attentive, time is wasted because instructions have to be repeated. Teachers teach basic skills well so that most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. This was evident in Year 3, where pupils increased their skills in passing because the teacher carefully explained how to position the hands and organised them carefully into groups to practise their skills in simple games. Because teachers use clear explanations and ensure that lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, pupils improve their skills and exercise vigorously. Pupils in Year 6 made very good progress with rugby skills and sustained their physical activity well because the teacher took advantage of opportunities to use demonstrations and to organise games in which pupils competed enthusiastically.

128. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 have opportunities to learn to swim and most make sound progress. The co-ordinator has worked hard to develop extra curricular provision and competitive sport. Resources are good, having been recently supplemented. The school has the benefit of two halls and very generous grounds, often shared with other schools. Pupils have opportunities to participate in after school activities to extend their skills in rugby, football, netball, athletics, hockey, keep fit, cricket and line dancing. The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of how the subject is to develop in order to raise standards further.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

129. Standards meet the levels specified in the locally Agreed Syllabus for pupils in Year 2 but are below the required level for pupils in Year 6. Over the past two years, the subject co-ordinator has worked hard to put in place a scheme of work that takes full account of the locally agreed requirements for the subject as well as the needs and experiences of the pupils. This provides good support for teachers and ensures that the subject is balanced and given an appropriate amount of time. However, because the subject has not been taught systematically in the past, older pupils have some way to go to catch up and there are still significant gaps in their learning.

130. Teaching and learning are sound, overall, and good in Years 1 and 2 where teaching maintains the balance well between learning about religion and learning from religion. By Year 2, pupils are developing an appropriate understanding of the basic teachings of Christianity. They know the key events of the Easter story, for example, and most understand that Easter cards have a religious significance. Writing in their books about Hindu shrines shows that they have learnt that some places are special for religious people, and they can describe places that are special to them.

131. In Years 3 to 6, pupils learn about major world religions such as Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism in addition to Christianity. Work in their books shows that the planned units of work are being taught. In discussions, however, pupils in Year 6 recalled very few facts about the different religions and make few links between them. Although they had studied Judaism in some depth earlier in the year, they struggled to remember the name of the Jewish place of worship. They know that Jesus was a Jew but do not know how long ago he lived, and that Moses was a very important Jewish person, but not why he was so revered. Pupils are similarly confused about what they have learnt in other religions and this reflects the lack of systematic study in the past. In discussion, pupils showed that they understand the need to respect people's different faiths but there is very little independent writing in their books to show that they have regular opportunities to respond and reflect in a personal way to the religious beliefs of others.

132. Where teaching has good or very good features, pupils respond very positively to the lesson and show high levels of interest. This was particularly evident in a lesson in Year 1, teaching pupils the symbolism of Easter eggs. Pupils had already learnt the main events of the Easter story in previous work because the teacher had recounted it well, using language they could understand.

They were keen to describe what they remembered, particularly the higher attaining pupils, who were anxious to retell every small detail of the story. Lower attaining pupils did not offer to contribute but sat and listened intently. The teacher made very good use of pictures of eggs and chicks and this promoted good discussion on the wonder of new life. Pupils made links enthusiastically with work they had done on caterpillars and butterflies, demonstrating a real enjoyment for learning and a developing understanding of symbolism in religion.

133. Where teaching is no better than sound it is sometimes because pupils do not have enough opportunities to take an active part in the lesson. For example, in a lesson on the childhood of Jesus, the teacher had good background knowledge of the subject and was well prepared. However, too much time was spent reading passages from Bible stories and explaining events, and pupils became bored with the inactivity. They left two or three interested classmates to answer all the questions and the teacher did not do enough to involve the rest of the class in the learning. In most lessons, pupils with learning difficulties are given good support by classroom assistants and are able to take full part. The pupils with behaviour difficulties are generally managed well but, sometimes, inappropriate chatter slows the pace of the lesson.

134. The school has recently purchased new artefacts to illustrate the teaching of world religions and these are helping pupils to make links between the different faiths and their practices. Pupils who studied Islam wrote about the Muslim prayer mat and the importance of daily prayer to Muslims. A model of the Torah helped pupils appreciate its construction and the need to handle it carefully. Other resources, such as Bibles, are old, ready for renewal and do little to generate interest.

135. The sound management of the subject so far has ensured that the school is well placed to improve further. Not enough use is made of ICT to research the subject or to present pupils' work. There is limited use of visits to places of religious interest and visitors of different faiths to extend the pupils' learning. The subject knowledge of some teachers is insecure, particularly on how to teach the reflective element of the subject.