

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST DENYS CHURCH OF ENGLAND INFANT SCHOOL**

Ibstock

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120138

Head teacher: Mrs Jane Sharp

Reporting inspector: Mr Geoff Jones  
11816

Dates of inspection: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> December 2002

Inspection number: 248101

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
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	5 to 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Laud Close Ibstock Leicestershire
Postcode:	LE67 6NL
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Jacqueline Powers
Date of previous inspection:	24 <sup>th</sup> – 27 <sup>th</sup> November 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11816	Geoff Jones	Registered inspector	Science Music Physical education History	How high are standards? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
14141	Ernest Marshall	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20653	Eva Wilson	Team inspector	Foundation Stage English Art and design Religious Education	
20404	John Evans	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography Design and Technology Special educational needs	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
2423	Susan Leyden	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs MLD Unit	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Denys C of E Voluntary Controlled (VC) Infant School has 170 pupils on roll and is smaller than most other primary schools. It admits pupils aged between five and seven years. There are six mainstream classes at present with a further reception class to be admitted in January 2003. In addition, there is a unit for ten pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD Unit) who come from a wider area than the school's catchment area. Two teachers share the responsibility for teaching and managing the MLD Unit. All mainstream classes have a single year age band. The school serves the large village of Ibstock, which has a range of housing types, including local authority and private housing of varying ages. The school building is an open-plan design with the exception of the three Year 1 mobile classrooms. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is 12 per cent. When children are first admitted to the reception class their attainment is below average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is 24 per cent, and of these twelve pupils have statements of special need. A further eight pupils receive support from outside the school and their main difficulties are either communication constraints or general learning difficulties. Only two pupils come from a minority ethnic background and no pupils need extra support with speaking English.

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

The school is effective and provides a good standard of education for its pupils. Standards in speaking, listening, reading, writing, mathematics and science match the average expected for seven year old pupils. This represents good achievement by the pupils because their attainment has risen from when they were first admitted to the school at the age of five. The quality of teaching is very good in the Foundation Stage and in the MLD Unit. It is good overall in the rest of the school. Pupils learn well and make good progress during their time at the school. The leadership and management provided by the head teacher and other key members of staff are good; this ensures that both the curriculum provided and the quality of teaching and learning within the school all remain good. The governing body is very effective in overseeing the work of the school. It monitors the progress of the school development plan effectively as well as the school's budget and standards. The school provides good value for money.

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

- The very good quality of education provided for pupils in the MLD Unit.
- The very good provision for children in the reception class.
- The very good provision for extra-curricular activities, including a wide range of educational visits.
- The good quality leadership and management provided by the head teacher and key staff.
- The excellent behaviour and very good attitudes of the pupils.
- The very good provision for pupils' social and moral development.
- The excellent relationships between teachers and pupils and between the pupils.

#### **What could be improved**

- The attainment and progress of higher attaining pupils in English and mathematics.

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

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

The school was last inspected in November 1997. It has made very good improvements since then. Pupils' attainments in design and technology have been improved from an unsatisfactory level to one that is now above the level expected for seven year olds. The management of the MLD Unit was unsatisfactory in 1997 and this is now very good and has enabled pupils to make good progress in their learning. The quality of education provided for children in the Foundation Stage has been enhanced from good to very good. Experimental and investigative work in mathematics and science is now much better than it was at the time of the last inspection. This has been partially the reason behind better attainments in science, and improved standards are also because the allocation of time to science teaching is now greater and more appropriate than previously. The progress towards meeting the targets on individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs is now reviewed and recorded regularly. The work of the governing body has improved and governors are now much more involved in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the

school and in the work that goes on in the classroom. The quality of teaching has been enhanced and this has resulted in greater achievement by pupils in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Extra-curricular activities provided by the school are better; Year 1 and Year 2 pupils are now able to attend a very popular gymnastic club, and pupils have the opportunity to learn to play the recorder and to participate in multi-sports. In addition, the school offers a wide range of educational visits to enrich the curriculum.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
Reading	C	D	C	B
Writing	C	D	C	B
Mathematics	D	E	D	C

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

In comparison with all schools nationally, the school's 2002 results in the annual national tests for seven year olds matched the national average in reading and writing and were below average in mathematics. Compared with similar schools the results were above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in science show that it was average at the time of the tests. Over the last five years, apart from the year 2001, the school's reading standards have risen and writing standards have been maintained. However, mathematics standards have been below average for the last four years. The findings of the inspection show that present attainments are sound overall in the reception classes. By the end of the reception year, children exceed the early learning goals in creative development and in personal, social and emotional development. Their attainments are as expected for their age in all other early learning goals. Pupils in the MLD Unit make good progress in their learning as a result of high quality teaching. At the age of seven, pupils' attainments are now close to the average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Attainments in art and design and design and technology are above those expected for this age group. Attainment levels in information and communication technology (ICT) meet those expected nationally and all other National Curriculum subjects meet national expectations and religious education meets the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Throughout the school most pupils are achieving well but despite efforts by the school, higher attaining pupils are not achieving well enough. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress as a result. The school has been successful in meeting its targets in reading, writing and mathematics this year. The school is on course to meet its current targets.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and work hard in the classroom.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils understand the school's high expectations of good behaviour and respond willingly.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils respect the feelings of others and accept responsibilities very readily. Relationships within the school are excellent.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Authorised absence is well above the national average but unauthorised absence is below average.

The main causes of absences are the high incidence of short duration sickness and some taking of family holidays in term time. The school is aware of the situation and is taking appropriate action. The situation is

now improving. No incidences of oppressive behaviour or bullying were observed at any time during the inspection.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2
Quality of teaching	Very 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 was good overall and there were no unsatisfactory lessons observed during the period of the inspection. Teaching of children in the Foundation Stage is very good and children get a first-rate start to their education. The quality of teaching in the MLD Unit is also very good and teachers and support staff establish clear routines that involve whole class teaching, individual and small group work as well as practical activities. The good teaching in the rest of the school contributes significantly to pupils' good achievements and to the very good attitudes they have to their work. Teachers have excellent relationships with the pupils in their class and as a consequence manage their behaviour very well. Pupils work hard, concentrate well and are encouraged to be independent whenever possible. Teachers have good subject knowledge, particularly in the main areas of the curriculum and this enhances the pupils' good learning. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good enabling pupils to acquire basic skills in a systematic way. Their skills in speaking, reading and writing are used effectively in a range of subjects such as history, geography and religious education and their mathematical skills as well as their skills in literacy are used well in science lessons. Average ability pupils are challenged well during the activities planned by class teachers. Lower attaining pupils are supported well by well-trained and experienced classroom support staff and this enables them to make good progress in their learning. Higher attaining pupils sometimes do not make enough progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons. In these instances assessment information noted by teachers is not used rigorously enough to plan work to meet the needs of these pupils. On other occasions appropriate work is planned but many of the higher attaining pupils do not undertake the activities because they have to complete work set for average pupils before they are allowed to start it. Teaching is often imaginative and thoroughly absorbing for pupils. Learning resources are used very well to stimulate pupils' interest and enhance their understanding.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Provision is very good in the Foundation Stage. In Years 1 and 2 activities are relevant and interesting for the age and interests of the pupils. Statutory requirements are met for the National Curriculum subjects and religious education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are supported well by well trained and experienced classroom support assistants
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. Pupils' personal and social understanding is developed through activities involving the discussion of issues as they occur. Pupils' self-esteem is built through valuing their contributions. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good and their social and moral development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. Teachers assess pupils' attainment and progress well but using the information does not always enable them to plan work to meet the needs of higher attaining pupils fully.

The school has developed a good partnership with parents. There is a good range and quality of information for parents as well as workshops for new parents in order to explain how they can support their children. Registration complies with statutory requirements and the school day operates punctually. Provision for extra-curricular activities, including educational visits, gymnastics, recorder club and multi-sports, is very good for infant pupils. Provision for pupils in the MLD Unit is very good, enabling them to feel secure and to make good progress.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Good. The head teacher leads by example and has a clear idea of the direction the school should take. The head teacher, the deputy head teacher and one of the teachers in the MLD Unit form an effective team that develops the work of the school well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body works hard on behalf of the school and has a good idea of its strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school has a clear cycle of events for evaluating its performance. Priorities for action are chosen in the light of evidence and initiatives are monitored regularly and carefully.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The budget is used wisely and initiatives on the school development plan are linked closely to it. Teachers and classroom support assistants work closely together and this has a positive impact on pupils' progress.

There is a good number of suitably qualified and experienced teachers and support staff. The school's accommodation is good. The accommodation includes a good environmental area that pupils use well to study animals and plants as part of the science curriculum. A studio is used well for music and drama and the school hall is sufficiently large to accommodate all pupils comfortably. The quality and range of learning resources is good. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. Its arrangements for appraisal and performance management are very good.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like coming to school.</li> <li>• The teaching in the school is good.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Children make good progress.</li> <li>• Pupils' behaviour is good.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems.</li> <li>• The school expects children to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>• The school helps children to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school's provision for an interesting range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agree with all of the above positive views of the parents. In fact, behaviour is excellent. The team disagrees with parents' views on activities organised outside of lesson time. The opportunities provided in a school of this size are very good and pupils have the opportunity to attend a gymnastic club, learn to play the recorder or participate in multi-sports. In addition, pupils have a wide range of educational visits that enrich the curriculum for them.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Children are admitted to the reception class at the beginning of the autumn term if they have reached the age of five before the end of February and the rest are admitted at the beginning of the spring term. When they first start school their attainments are below average. As a result of very good teaching children achieve well. Their progress in learning is good and their attainments in communication, language and literacy are on course to be in line with what is expected by the time they are ready to start Year 1. Attainments in mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and in their personal and social development are all also on course to meet the levels expected. At the end of the reception year their attainments are on course to be above average in personal and social aspects of their development as well as in their creative development.
2. The very good leadership and management in the MLD Unit enable pupils to make good progress in their learning. The caring atmosphere in the classroom breeds a feeling of security and pupils enjoy the learning activities planned for them. However, more regular opportunities for pupils to integrate into mainstream classes would give the pupils more chance to communicate with others and as a result their speaking and listening skills would develop even further.
3. When the school's seven year old pupils took the latest annual national tests in 2002 the results matched the average standards for reading and writing and were below average for mathematics. However, when these results are compared with similar schools they are above average levels in reading and writing and average in mathematics. Pupils' present standards meet with national expectations in reading, writing, mathematics and science. This represents good achievement because pupils were below average when they were admitted to the school and are on course to match the average by the time they are seven years old. When compared with pupils' standards during the last inspection the latest results indicate maintenance of standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening and mathematics and an improvement in science. The school's trend over the last five years has shown fairly stable results in reading and writing at an average level and below average standards in mathematics. Standards in mathematics have been below average for past four years and the school is now addressing this successfully. This, as well as maintenance of English standards, has been achieved by the school despite the fact that children continue to have attainment levels when they first start school that have been falling further below the national average.
4. Almost all pupils are on course to attain the level expected in writing by the end of Year 2. They write neatly, spell words correctly or logically and usually use full stops and capital letters appropriately. They also use correct tenses and a good range of words to make their writing interesting. However, although the school set up 'booster' groups of pupils during the previous academic year in an attempt to extend the more able pupils, this provision was not wholly successful. In spite of the school's efforts there are still too few pupils reaching higher levels in writing. The writing style of these higher attaining pupils needs to improve so that their efforts are interesting and contain suspense, humour or sadness. The deficiency is mainly because descriptions of characters' feelings are seldom included and pupils are not using joining words to form complex sentences. Pupils' reading skills have improved through a consistent development of pupils' knowledge of letter sounds and blends. Their understanding of the books they read is enhanced by frequent opportunities to read and talk about what they have read in different sized groups and their writing skills are practised in a range of subjects across the curriculum. By the end of Year 2 the pupils' listening and speaking skills are good. When they discuss as a class or in groups they do so with much enthusiasm and listen carefully to others' contributions, often developing what has been said.

5. In mathematics, pupils in Year 2 are well placed to attain the standards expected of seven year olds by the end of the year. Seven year old pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of number patterns and facts. They have also developed a sound understanding of the place value of numerals in different numbers. Pupils can add and subtract at an appropriate level and solve number problems mentally. They are beginning to use standard units of length when measuring and also illustrate information they have collected using block graphs. Pupils' ability to use and apply mathematics is satisfactory. This aspect has improved since the last inspection. With the exception of higher attaining pupils all pupils make good progress. Lower attaining pupils are very well supported by classroom assistants and average attaining pupils are provided with work that challenges them. Extension activities are usually planned for the higher attaining pupils but many do not reach this more challenging and advanced work because they are often expected to undertake the easier work planned for average pupils first. This does not have a positive impact on their progress.
6. Pupils' attainments in science have improved since the last inspection mainly because their knowledge and understanding of investigative and experimental work have benefited from better strategies in teaching. Their attainments now match what is expected for their age and this is reflected in the teachers' assessments of what they know, understand and can do. Pupils now carry out a good range of investigations and have improved their understanding of science accordingly. Younger pupils have a good understanding of life and living processes and categorise animals and plants into different groups knowledgeably. This aspect of science learning is consolidated by a range of activities and educational visits such as guided tours of the nearby 'Outwoods' and use of the wild area at the back of the school. Older pupils show a sound understanding of how the properties of a range of materials are linked closely to their usage and that certain materials such as elastic return to their original shape when a force is applied.
7. Attainment in ICT meets the required national standard and has been maintained since the last inspection. By the time pupils have reached seven years of age they have developed sound skills at using the keyboard and use a computer mouse. They use word processing skills effectively to amend and edit their writing. They use graphics programs to produce simple images and are effective in saving and printing their work.
8. Year 2 pupils' attainments are on course to meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. They have a satisfactory understanding of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah and the Hindu festival of Diwali. Their knowledge and understanding of the meaning of Christmas and the Advent season are good. They know a good range of bible stories including the story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt and the story of Jonah. Teachers have arranged visits to the local church on a number of occasions and as a result pupils have a sound knowledge of the internal parts of a church building.
9. Attainment in art and design as well as in design and technology is above that expected by the age of seven. Attainment in all other subjects meets that expected for seven year olds.

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

10. Most parents responding to the questionnaire say that their children like to come to this school and want to talk about what they have been doing when they get home. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and significantly help to promote a climate that is very conducive to learning. Pupils of all age groups mix well and enjoy working together in pairs or in groups as required. In class they take turns and share resources without fuss.
11. The teaching staff and classroom assistants show personal knowledge of, and genuine respect for, all pupils. In turn the pupils respond well, show an interest and enthusiasm for lessons and try hard to please. Pupils confidently volunteer to answer teachers' questions, and when required, explain to the class exactly how they have arrived at a particular solution

to the problem concerned. They are happy to show their completed work and want to talk about it. Pupils with special educational needs are fully engaged in all activities.

12. Pupils understand the school's high expectations of good behaviour and they respond well. Behaviour in class and around school is excellent and justifies the perception of good behaviour held by their parents. The high quality of relationships extends into the playground and the dining hall. There is no evidence of any oppressive behaviour or bullying. There are no recorded exclusions. Pupils' positive attitudes and excellent relationships are strengths of the school.
13. Pupils' personal development is very good. They are required to take responsibility for organising themselves and looking after their personal belongings from the reception classes onwards. Without instruction, outdoor shoes are changed each time pupils return from the playground to their classrooms. When bad weather means that pupils must come into the classrooms early, they settle down to individual reading or change their reading books. Parents read with their children at these times or speak to the class teachers.
14. Pupils willingly take on extra responsibilities such as roles as register monitors and message takers, and will tidy up group work-tables when lessons are ended. All pupils are involved in the school's 'Buddy' system and take personal care of the pupils from the MLD Unit. The assigned Year 2 pupils willingly give support to help the pupils from the Unit join in the mainstream and play activities provided. Pupils are made aware of the needs of others and they readily respond by regular involvement in both local and national charities and appeals.
15. Pupils' attendance is unsatisfactory and is worse than at the time of the last inspection, being below the standards achieved nationally by other schools. Unauthorised absence levels however are better than the national average. The main causes of absence are the high incidence of short duration sickness and some taking of family holidays in term time. The school is aware of the situation and is taking appropriate action. Registration complies with statutory requirements and the school day operates punctually.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

16. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is very good in the Foundation Stage and good in Key Stage 1. There were a few examples of excellent teaching in the Foundation Stage and in the MLD Unit. These lessons demonstrated first class planning, excellent use of resources and skilful questioning of pupils. Children make very good progress in communication, language and literacy in the former and in religious education in the latter. Since the last inspection the teaching in the Foundation Stage has improved from good to very good. Teaching in Key Stage 1 was described as satisfactory in the previous report and there have been important improvements since that time that have enhanced its quality to a good level.
17. The Foundation Stage teacher has a very good knowledge about how young children learn and this enables lesson plans that provide relevant practical experiences. These build a very solid foundation for their present and future learning. The teacher provides well-planned activities for children that stimulate their interest and allow them to build knowledge, skills and understanding as a result. For example, children are helped to develop their language and writing ability through excellent use of letter sounds to help them to read words such as "Fee fi fo fum, I smell children for my tum" and through the expert introduction of new vocabulary, making it easy for children to use in their own sentences. Very good mathematical opportunities are provided for children to recognise numbers, count, recognise and name shapes and use mathematical vocabulary. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world are taught very well. The quality of teaching personal, social and emotional development is very good. The class teacher and learning support assistants value children, the efforts they make and the responses they give. As a result children feel secure, gain confidence, enjoy their learning and are keen to succeed.

18. Teaching in the MLD Unit is very good and has a good impact on pupils' progress. Teachers and support staff establish clear routines for every part of the school day and, as a result, pupils feel secure and know what is expected of them. Lessons are carefully planned and have clear learning objectives for each pupil. There is a good balance between whole class teaching, individual and small group work and practical activities. This enables pupils to be active and absorbed throughout each lesson. Teachers and support staff assess pupils' knowledge and understanding and consolidate new learning. As a result, pupils recall what they learned during previous lessons and become more self-confident. Teachers build attractive displays of pupils' work to provide a stimulating learning environment and to celebrate the quality and range of the items produced. The provision for pupils with special educational needs in the rest of the classes is good and pupils learn effectively. The individual educational plans for pupils with special educational needs are useful in co-ordinating and guiding provision. However, they are not always concise enough to inform day-to-day teaching. In some cases, the targets set are too broad and numerous to be helpful. Many are not written in a way that allows clear assessment. This means that pupils' progress cannot always be judged as accurately as it should be. As a result, teachers' planning loses some precision and effectiveness. Despite this, pupils with special needs make progress and achieve well because they are strongly supported in lessons
19. The relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. There is a sense of security in each of the classrooms that breeds a feeling of calm and care for everyone else in the room. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and as a result their response is to work hard and to increase their pace of working. Homework is used effectively to support pupils' learning in the classroom. Teachers have high expectations of most pupils, particularly average attaining pupils, and the work planned is challenging. However, expectations of higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently high. There is a successful working relationship between teachers and classroom assistants that benefits pupils. Liaison between the two is rigorous. Classroom assistants support small groups of pupils in their learning and assess how well each one has understood the ideas introduced during the lesson. Teachers also assess pupils' attainments during the lessons and often take immediate action to improve pupils' work or help them to overcome specific difficulties. Learning resources are used particularly effectively to enhance pupils' understanding or to reinforce their learning. For example, old photographs of scenes of yesteryear were used very well as a starting point for pupils to discuss the differences between then and now. This highlighted very effectively how things had changed over the past century.
20. As a result of good teaching pupils achieve well during their time at the school. Pupils' current work is close to the average. Taking into account the below average level of attainment when this particular group of pupils was admitted to the reception classes pupils have made good progress in their learning. Pupils' literacy and mathematical skills are average and the good developments in teaching design and technology have enabled pupils to improve attainment from the previously unsatisfactory level to above those expected for their age. This has been achieved through hard work and the provision of good quality in-service teacher training. Teaching of reading, writing, mathematics and science is good, mainly due to the good subject knowledge of the teachers. However, there are a small number of aspects of teaching that could be improved in order to raise pupils' standards even higher, particularly those of the higher attaining pupils. Although teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and assign levels to pupils' writing rigorously, the findings are not used thoroughly enough to set specific targets for pupils. Teachers do not yet encourage pupils to extend their writing skills through a greater focus on creating more interest for the reader by the inclusion of the characters' feelings. Pupils are not regularly reminded about concentrating more on the use of connecting words to make more complex sentences and avoiding repetitive sentence starters. Mathematics teaching could be improved since it does not always ensure that the work planned for higher attaining pupils to undertake is not used as an 'add-on' activity for them to get to if they work fast enough. These pupils have the ability to manage this work as the main activity. Teachers' subject knowledge is now good in design and technology. This has improved pupils' attainments very considerably since the last inspection.

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

21. The school curriculum is good. The school teaches all the subjects that it should and provides a suitably wide range of interesting and relevant activities. Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good and children are provided with a very good foundation to their future learning. The curriculum for Key Stage 1 meets the needs of average and lower ability pupils well and provides well for pupils with special educational needs. The needs of the more able pupils are met satisfactorily but the curriculum does not always challenge these pupils enough.
22. The provision for pupils' personal and social education is very good. This is reflected in teachers' excellent management of pupils and the very high quality of relationships at all levels. Teachers raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem by valuing their contributions. They manage pupils sensitively and provide effective examples of consideration and care. Activities such as providing opportunities for pupils to sit in a circle in order to share ideas and experiences are carefully sequenced to build pupils' personal and social understanding. The outcomes of these measures are seen, for example, in pupils' very good attitudes to learning, their respect for the feelings of others and their very good behaviour.
23. The school's strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy are working well. The results of this are seen in the good progress that most pupils achieve in these skills. This improvement is closely linked to the good practice they have when using these skills in other subjects across the curriculum. Planning arrangements for most other subjects show the topics pupils are to cover and, in some subjects, for example ICT, spell out clearly how pupils are to progress. The school's planning arrangements in, for instance, history and geography, make it more difficult for teachers to plan for improvement. This is because they do not show clearly enough how the knowledge and skills of each subject are to be built. As a result, teachers' assessments in these subjects lack sharpness and detail. This slows progress, particularly for the more able pupils because teachers lack the information to plan for progress and challenge.
24. Teachers make effective, planned use of ICT in a good range of subjects, including English, mathematics and design and technology. For example, pupils improve the presentation and accuracy of their writing through word processing and gain experience of graphics programs by incorporating computer-generated artwork in card designs. This builds pupils' computer skills, strengthens learning in other subjects and improves pupils' understanding of different ways in which technology can be applied.
25. The school has responded effectively to the curriculum issues raised by the previous inspection. Science is now taught systematically and allocated enough time. As a result, standards are now more secure. The provision for design and technology is very much improved so that standards in this subject have gone from unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection to above average. Teachers now provide better opportunities for pupils to follow investigations in science and mathematics. This ensures that pupils are becoming more confident in, for example, solving mathematical problems and explaining their reasoning. However, the weakness, identified by the previous inspection, in providing for the more able pupils has not yet been resolved.
26. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. The good range of lunchtime and after-school activities includes gym club, multi-sports and recorder teaching. It is greatly enhanced by a wide variety of well-planned outings and visits to places of educational interest such as Tamworth Castle and the Outwoods. These are carefully linked to the curriculum and make a valuable contribution to pupils' personal and social development and to their learning, for example in geography.
27. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. As a result, these pupils make good progress and achieve well. Teachers are careful to include all pupils in the full range of activities and quick to build pupils' confidence and self-esteem through recognition

and praise. Classroom assistants work effectively with the less able pupils and those with special educational needs to ensure that they learn successfully. The individual educational plans for pupils with special educational needs are useful for planning purposes. However, they are not always specific enough to inform day-to-day teaching. In some cases, the targets set are too broad and numerous to be helpful. This means that pupils' progress cannot always be judged as accurately as it should be. Despite this, pupils with special needs progress and achieve well because they are strongly supported in lessons. The school provides equality of social and personal opportunity for all pupils. However, the work set, for example in mathematics, does not always challenge the most able pupils as much as it should.

28. There are good links with the local community, notably with local churches and the library. Links with partner institutions are positive and effective. Pre-school links and links with the adjoining junior school promote a smooth transition for children on entry and when leaving the school. The regular contacts that subject leaders maintain with colleagues in other local schools help them to stay well informed and increase their effectiveness in managing their subjects.
29. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and remains a strength of the school. Provision for spiritual development is good. The caring ethos of the school and teachers' skilled management give pupils the security to reflect on their experiences and develop their own ideas. Teachers' choice of music and stories often succeeds in encouraging pupils to reflect on their own and others' emotions. Carefully planned visits open pupils' eyes to aspects of the natural world, allowing them, for example, to experience and respond to the changing face of the seasons in local woodland.
30. The provision for pupils' social and moral development is very good. Consideration for others underpins the ethos of the school and is reflected in all aspects of its daily life. Teachers and support staff provide strong examples of effective teamwork and manage pupils with warmth, care and a sense of shared purpose. Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to practise working together, for example in ICT. They often commend pupils' work, and pupils themselves show spontaneous appreciation of each other's work. A good example of this was seen in a Year 1 English lesson, when pupils showed obvious delight at each other's illustrations in books they had made. Teachers and support staff are very effective in helping pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong and reflect on the consequences of their actions. They achieve this through discussion and sensitive management of day-to-day incidents. The results of this very good provision are seen in the high quality of pupils' behaviour and personal and social development.
31. The provision for cultural development is good. Pupils gain a good understanding of their local culture through visits within the village and further afield, for example, to Tamworth Castle. They gain some experience of art from different traditions, for example by studying canal art, Aboriginal art and the work of painters such as van Gogh. They learn about music and dance from their own and others cultures by, for instance, listening to music by the major European composers and through visits to the school by musicians and dancers from different traditions including folk and ballet. Through their work in religious education, pupils learn something of the major festivals, such as Diwali, Hanukkah and Christmas. However, teachers do not do enough to increase pupils' understanding of the traditions from which these spring or the diversity of cultures around them.
32. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum. The ten pupils in the MLD Unit have an adapted curriculum to ensure coverage of work appropriate to reception and Years 1 and 2. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated into all mainstream activities. The whole school is taught Makaton communication in order to enable pupils from the MLD Unit to be included fully when they participate in whole school events. For example, this is used during collective acts of worship for the whole school so that all pupils can take part fully. Displays of

pupils' work are equally representative of boys and girls and all pupils are respected as individuals by the teaching and non-teaching staff alike.

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

33. The school takes a very responsible attitude to health and safety issues and the procedures for ensuring these are very good. The governing body formally discusses school security and safety each term and implements the recommendations arising out of regular premises inspections. This has ensured that the pupils have a safe environment at school. Routine testing of fire equipment is systematically organised and a fire drill is carried out each term. Testing of other equipment such as physical education apparatus and portable electrical equipment is programmed annually and test notes are all current. First aid procedures are very well implemented. The school has four qualified first aiders available to ensure full coverage at all times. Procedures for child protection are very good and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities.
34. The school promotes pupils' personal, social and health education very well through the curriculum teaching. Pupils in the MLD Unit are taught Makaton sign language and all staff and other children have acquired sufficient proficiency to use the system. This ensures the pupils with hearing and language difficulties can more easily communicate with their classmates and be fully involved. The school arranges an annual visit by the 'Life Education Bus', a touring unit providing instruction on personal development and safety matters. A wide range of visiting specialists attends the school, particularly in the MLD Unit, to complement the very good support already given by the staff. Pupils' personal development is monitored by both the teaching and support staff on an informal basis and a summary is provided on their annual reports for parents' information. Pupils with special educational needs are monitored continually and have individual educational plans that include personal development targets. Parents are involved in the regular reviews.
35. Carefully planned induction into the Foundation classes includes an open day visit by the parents and children, followed by part-time attendance. This allows children to build up quickly the trust and confidence in the staff that enable them to take part in the range of activities provided. Similar well-planned activities and visits by pupils and staff facilitate smooth transfer to the junior school on the same campus.
36. The school's provision for monitoring attendance is good. Aware of the need to improve pupils' attendance, the school has recently written to all parents and enclosed copies of relevant Department for Education and Skills information on parental responsibility. Registers are monitored daily and any unexplained absence generates a telephone call from the school secretary to the parents concerned. These procedures are beginning to have an impact in improving attendance but it is too early to make a judgement about whether they will enable the rate of attendance to be close to the national average or not. Two educational welfare officers are working with the school to ensure early liaison with parents of those children with poor attendance records. This has a good impact on specific pupils' attendances. All pupils are individually tracked and a weekly printout identifies all pupils with less than 90 per cent attendance. The educational welfare officers and the head teacher meet regularly to discuss the problem and to identify those families requiring home visits. Pupils' attendance records are now reported to parents at the end of each term as opposed to a single report at the end of the school year.
37. The school has very good procedures to monitor behaviour and promotes the pupils' excellent behaviour by a simple process of the staff setting clear standards of respect that the pupils are expected to and do follow. Each class discusses the school's behaviour code at the beginning of the year and adapts the principles to draw up their own classroom rules. Members of staff successfully monitor behaviour informally and have different strategies for different pupils. The head teacher has an overview and monitors behaviour as she moves around the classrooms, the dining hall and the playground. Mid-day supervisors have

received in-house training in behaviour management and implement the procedures as required.

38. The pupils respond well. If any problems arise, circle time is used by the pupils in class to discuss the problem and to enable the children to suggest and agree their own solutions. Sanctions are simple, a look or a quiet word is often enough. Any serious incident is recorded by the staff for later discussion with parents. These are rare. Rewards by stickers and smiley faces are given out. The head teacher keeps a 'Golden Book' and class teachers enter the names of pupils showing good effort, work or attitude. The head teacher can add further names of pupils she personally observes, and all are presented with certificates at whole school assemblies. Pupils are clearly proud to receive these accolades.
39. The school has maintained good quality procedures and practices for measuring and tracking pupils' attainment and progress since the previous inspection. Methods used in English and mathematics are good. They include analyses of Year 2 National Curriculum statutory tests, as well as day-to-day tracking of pupils' progress and attainment through teachers' marking of work. Data from test analyses is stored electronically using the computer program *Assessment Manager*, and put to good use. For example, Year 2 teachers, together with their colleagues from Year 3 of the junior school, analyse the national test results to ensure that when pupils transfer, their learning is matched to their needs and stages of development. This is very good transfer practice. The school also uses data stored electronically to identify pupils who are more or very able, those with special educational needs and those who are underachieving. However, the information is not used sufficiently to challenge the more able pupils consistently.
40. Very good records are compiled. A cumulative, comprehensive record is built up for each pupil from which important information about a pupil's progress and attainment may be drawn readily. Not only does the record hold clear information about English, mathematics and science but it carries information about all the other subjects too. The end of year report to parents is kept year on year, and contributes to building a descriptive curricular record of pupils' strengths and weakness across the curriculum. Procedures for measuring and tracking pupils' progress and attainment in some of the subjects besides English, mathematics and science are at an early stage, with most subjects following national guidelines. Additionally, co-ordinators are building a portfolio of pupils' assessed work for some subjects, such as art and design. The portfolio demonstrates the progression of skills, knowledge and understanding within the subject. This is used effectively for teachers to assess pupils' skills by using the examples as comparisons for different levels.
41. Use of assessment to inform curricular provision is satisfactory. In order to ensure that the levels they assign to pupils' written work are accurate, year group teachers discuss the characteristics of completed work comparing it with the marking criteria. This activity is very useful in familiarising teachers with the demands of a level within a subject, so that they are confident about the judgements they make about pupils' attainments. This has a good impact on pupils' progress because teachers develop a good knowledge of how well pupils build knowledge, skills and understanding. As a whole staff, teachers review pupils' performance in the national tests at the end of Year 2. Information from reading and spelling tests undertaken by Year 1 pupils is used in planning. Additionally, all ongoing work is marked carefully. Good use is made of the findings from such activities in identifying pupils who are more or very able, those with special educational needs and those who are underachieving, as mentioned above. The school also identifies particular strengths and weaknesses through these exercises. However, the findings from such activities are not used thoroughly enough to set specific targets and reflect them in planning in order to nurture the individual skills of the more able pupils. Teachers have a very good knowledge of pupils' personal development. This is built from close and frequent contact with parents, regular class discussions about a wide range of issues and a caring ethos that enables teachers to know individual personal problems that pupils may be experiencing.

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

42. Parents have very supportive views of the school. Parents of children with special educational needs are particularly appreciative of the support given by the school. The staff are regarded highly and seen as caring, friendly and helpful.
43. The range and quality of information given to parents are good overall. Parent consultation evenings are held each term and the school provides a choice of dates to enable more parents to attend. An open afternoon is provided for new parents to meet the staff and see the type of work that children do. Each year reading and number workshops are arranged for new parents in order to provide them with information on the work to be covered and the level of support they can give to their children. The school issues guidelines for home reading support. The home/school agreement and guidelines for parental help with homework are issued each year and a curriculum letter giving details of each term's work is issued at the beginning of the term.
44. Newsletters are regular, reader-friendly in style and informative. The school prospectus is comprehensive and fully complies with statutory requirements. The governing body's annual report to parents requires minor review to ensure full compliance. Pupils' annual reports cover all subjects but have no section allocated for parental signature and comments. There is little information on what pupils cannot do, and targets are vague.
45. The staff, with support from friends and members of the community, organise and promote an annual programme of social and fund-raising events that are well supported. Funds raised provide for items such as the 'Life Education Bus', visits by performing artists and the workshop opportunities. Parents will readily volunteer to help with particular events and freely give their time to accompany children on off-site visits.
46. Parent helpers in school are relatively few. The small number of parents who regularly attend school help with pupils' reading, in the library and on specific tasks connected with art and design and science. The reluctance of more parents to take an active role in the life and work of the school is a natural consequence of day-time employment and rather limits the contribution they could make and its consequential impact on their children's education. Parents provide good support with their children's learning at home with homework such as reading, spelling practice and occasional mathematics work and topic research. There is a good attendance at meetings specifically arranged to show parents how they can support their children in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

47. The head teacher has been in post for a period of four terms and works closely with the senior management team. Together they provide good leadership and management and has enabled a significant number of improvements to be made to the work of the school. This has maintained the standards of leadership and management since the time of the previous inspection. The head teacher takes a great deal of trouble to consult staff before decisions are made. She leads by example and demonstrates commitment, tenacity and the ability to make all members of staff feel valued. These good leadership and management skills are reflected very well in the parents' views as represented in the responses to the inspection questionnaire. Governors are included in every area of the work of the school and the chair of governors makes regular and frequent visits to the school to discuss issues with the head teacher.
48. The school development plan identifies areas for improvement well. The head teacher initially interviewed members of staff to discuss their perceptions of areas that needed improvement in the work of the school. The plan sensibly covers a period of three years and maps out the priorities for action, time scales and costings for the various initiatives during this period. Following the comparatively poor mathematics test results, this curriculum area was

accurately recognised as an urgent area for improvement. Raising the standards of higher attaining pupils' writing skills was also sensibly identified. The various initiatives named in the plan are not always linked sufficiently with precise and measurable success criteria connected with improvements in pupils' attainments. However, the school also undertakes a regular analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and also uses the data to decide on the content of the school development plan. The school is very well organised in terms of developing its work. Members of staff are made aware of the priorities that will form the subjects for staff meetings at the beginning of each school year.

49. The quality of teaching has been improved since the last inspection and this is due partly to the sound monitoring arrangements that are now in place and partly to the confidence and enthusiasm that have been engendered by the head teacher. Although the monitoring of teaching and learning is sound it is not rigorous enough and therefore has limited impact. The head teacher and subject co-ordinators monitor lessons formally and informally. Formal monitoring procedures involve careful and rigorous observations of lessons followed by a discussion. A written summary is provided for the class teacher so that all parties concerned are aware of the judgements. However, there are very few areas for improvement that have been identified during the lesson observations and opportunities to improve teaching even more are lost. Informal monitoring involves a careful evaluation of what pupils are doing in the classrooms and then talking to the teacher about the findings.
50. Subject co-ordinators monitor teachers' planning to ensure that the curriculum is being covered appropriately in each area of the curriculum. They monitor teaching of their subject when it is a focus for review on the school development plan; however, monitoring samples of pupils' work to identify what might be in need of improvement does not take place regularly and opportunities are missed that would improve pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. They are responsible for discussions with staff about the learning resource needs of their subject and ensure that the expenditure on resources for their subject is not overspent. These responsibilities provide them with opportunities to develop a deeper insight into the management of their subjects and also give a greater sense of leadership.
51. The leadership and management of the MLD Unit are very good. They were judged to be unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection and have improved very much since that time. The leadership and management of the unit is shared by two teachers who are both very experienced in teaching pupils with learning difficulties. They have succeeded in providing very good quality educational experiences that meet the needs of the pupils very well. The pupils are very happy and secure and make good systematic progress in their learning. The nursery nurse and support assistants work as a very effective team with the teachers, providing a dedicated and thoroughly effective approach. Although the very good management of the MLD Unit enables pupils to make good progress in their learning, this could be improved even further by taking more regular opportunities to integrate pupils into mainstream classes more regularly, particularly to improve language development. The management of special educational needs in the rest of the school is good. Arrangements are carefully organised to ensure prompt identification of pupils' needs and a quick, well-judged response. However, pupils' individual educational plans do not have well defined targets on which to make judgements on the success or otherwise of pupils' learning. The school's arrangements fully comply with statutory requirements.
52. The work of the governing body is effective and governors provide good support to the staff and pupils. Governors are led ably by the chair and they are involved well in the work of the school, providing good support to the head teacher. They have a clear understanding of the main strengths and weaknesses of the school, examine the school's annual assessment test results regularly and discuss issues that arise from this examination. This understanding gives them a clear insight into relevant issues and enables them to make appropriate decisions. The full governing body meets regularly and governors also attend regular committee meetings to oversee the work of the school effectively. The health and safety committee carries out risk assessments each term on the school buildings and surrounding

grounds and makes a full report on the health and safety implications to the full governing body. This has ensured that the school has a safe environment in which pupils can learn. Governors regularly monitor the work that goes on in classrooms. Individual governors visit classrooms and produce a formal report on the work in particular subjects for the rest of the governors. This helps governors to keep abreast of the school's curriculum.

53. Financial controls are very good and there are clear, secure processes for financial planning. The school finance officer is very efficient and attends some finance committee meetings. This ensures good communication. The finance committee monitors the budget rigorously and regularly, and the various initiatives on the school development plan are linked carefully to the budget. The amount of money carried forward from last year's budget to the present one is seven per cent of the budget. This is too large a proportion but the figure is misleading because 12 other local schools deposit money into the Ibstock development fund which is held in the school's account. The sum of money carried forward that actually belongs to the school is acceptable and is considerably less than seven per cent. The principles of best value are applied well by the school. Although it does not compare items of expenditure with similar schools it operates a tendering system that involves obtaining three quotations for more expensive purchases to get the best price. However, the school seeks to consult all people connected with the school, including parents, to find out opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
54. Induction arrangements for newly qualified and experienced teachers are good. The performance management process is securely in place and arrangements for this are very good. It successfully aligns teachers' professional targets with the prioritised needs of the school. A sensible review process operates half way through the cycle so that any teacher who may not be on course to meet the target can be supported in a range of different ways. The school's use of new technology is good. Most computers in the school are networked and connected to the Internet, all of the pupils' records are computerised and the budget and pupils' assessments are managed by ICT.
55. There is an appropriate number of suitably qualified and experienced teachers and support staff. The school administrative officer provides a very good service to parents and is very skilled at promoting good public relations. The school caretaker works effectively to maintain the school premises in a clean condition. The support assistants in the classroom are skilled and experienced and work closely and effectively with the class teachers. The school uses specific funding purposefully, for example to provide training for learning support assistants and thus contributing to their effectiveness.
56. The school's accommodation is good. Teachers make their classrooms interesting and enjoyable for pupils by means of attractive, well-presented displays. These motivate pupils and help to establish a positive ethos for learning. The accommodation includes a good environmental area that pupils use well to study animals and plants as part of the science curriculum. A studio is put to good use for music and drama lessons and the school hall is sufficiently large to accommodate all pupils comfortably.
57. The quality and range of learning resources are good and there are no significant weaknesses. This reflects the school's careful prioritising and well-planned spending. For example, there is a suitable number of computers and range of software and this is set to increase. Resources in the Foundation Stage are very good. They are well chosen to support all aspects of children's learning.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. In order to raise standards further and ensure good progress for all pupils, the head teacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Improve the attainment and progress of higher attaining pupils by:
  - making a greater use of assessment findings from analysing and marking of pupils' work to ensure that all pupils are provided with work that is suitable for their needs in mathematics; (Paragraph 41)
  - ensuring that when extension work is planned for higher attaining pupils in mathematics lessons this is the main focus for them rather than providing opportunities to do this work after they have finished work planned for other ability groups; (Paragraphs 5, 20, 85)
  - making sure that all teachers have a clear focus on what is required to achieve higher levels of attainment in reading, encompassing research skills in reading, Paragraph 81)
  - inclusion of the characters' feelings in their written stories, use of connecting words to make sentences more complex and encouragement to include more enhancing adjectives. (Paragraphs 4, 20, 77)

The following minor points for improvement should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Ensuring that the governors' annual report to parents complies with legal requirements. (Paragraph 44)
- Making sure that the targets on individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are more specific and able to be measured or judged easily and precisely. (Paragraphs 18, 27)
- Providing more opportunities for pupils in the MLD Unit to be integrated into mainstream lessons in order to develop their language skills. (Paragraphs 2, 63)

## **UNIT FOR PUPILS WITH MODERATE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (MLD)**

59. The school makes very good provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties who are taught in the MLD Unit. All the pupils make good progress in their learning and in their personal development because they receive a high level of support from skilled teachers and support staff, and work is well matched to their individual learning needs. The quality of teaching and support for the pupils is a strength in the school.
60. Pupils make steady progress in developing the early skills of reading and writing. They listen attentively to stories and are able to recall the main events. They are learning to recognise letter sounds, to match words to pictures, and to underwrite or copy words and short sentences. They can recognise and use numbers to 10. They can create patterns and recognise sequences and are learning to estimate, measure and compare objects of different shapes and sizes. They are given many opportunities to experiment and work with different materials. They develop their understanding of the world around them steadily through exploring features of their immediate environment and learning about other countries and customs. They are developing the skills for using ICT in many aspects of their work.
61. The pupils' personal and social development is very good. Teachers and support staff establish clear routines for every part of the school day and, as a result, pupils feel secure and know what is expected of them. They concentrate well throughout the day and are eager to participate in all the activities. They listen carefully during the introduction to each lesson and during story time, and wait their turn to answer questions. They are willing to help one another and share materials during practical activities. Skilful and sensitive management by staff helps those pupils who have more difficulty in coping with social and class routines to remain on task or to control their responses.
62. The quality of teaching and support is of a very high standard. Lessons are carefully planned, with clear learning objectives for each pupil. An appropriate balance between whole group teaching, individual and small group work, and practical activities, keeps the pupils active and interested throughout each lesson. Teachers and support staff continuously check pupils' understanding, reinforce new learning and encourage pupils to think of their own examples and solutions. As a result, pupils are able to remember what they have learned in previous lessons and become more confident in taking part in discussions. The spacious and well-organised classroom, where attractive displays celebrate the quality and range of the pupils work, provides a stimulating learning environment.
63. Pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, covering all aspects of the National Curriculum, suitably adapted to their learning needs. Additional opportunities for learning and for personal and social development are provided through the school's programme for inclusion. For instance, pupils from the Unit join pupils from the rest of the school at all playtimes and for school assemblies. Where considered appropriate, individual pupils join mainstream lessons. A 'Buddy' system linking pupils and classes provides opportunities for the Unit pupils to join in class activities, whilst small groups of mainstream pupils are invited to join in activities in the Unit. In order to enrich the pupils' learning experiences further, and in view of the importance of the learning that takes place between pupils through work and through play, the school does not explore sufficiently other opportunities that might be provided for Unit pupils to join mainstream lessons.
64. The school provides very good support and care for the pupils. Assessment procedures are detailed and thorough. Appropriate targets are identified on pupils' individual education plans and these form the basis for short and medium-term planning. Pupils' progress and welfare are closely monitored throughout the day. Members of the Unit staff have established close links with parents through regular communication and home/school diaries and are therefore able to take account of any concerns or changes in the pupils' circumstances.

65. The management and organisation of the Unit are very good. The head teacher and two specialist teachers, who jointly share responsibility for the management of the Unit, have established a clear sense of purpose and vision for this specialist provision. Documentation and record-keeping are excellent, providing a sound foundation for the Unit's work. The highly skilled and committed team of Unit teachers and support staff work effectively together to support pupils in all aspects of their learning and development.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	42
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	15	20	5	0	0	0
Percentage	5	36	47	12	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	170
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	36

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2
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	38	21	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	33	32	34
	Girls	18	19	19
	Total	51	51	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (81)	86 (85)	90 (81)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	34	34	35
	Girls	19	18	19
	Total	53	52	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (83)	88 (85)	92 (81)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

*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	166		
White – Irish			
White – any other White background	1		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1		
Mixed – White and Black African			
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background	1		
Asian or Asian British - Indian			
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani			
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background			
Black or Black British – Caribbean			
Black or Black British – African			
Black or Black British – any other Black background			
Chinese			
Any other ethnic group	1		
No ethnic group recorded			

*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 – Y2**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.25
Average class size	26.6

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y2**

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	271

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5
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.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2002
	£
Total income	385035
Total expenditure	382867
Expenditure per pupil	1859
Balance brought forward from previous year	25996
Balance carried forward to next year	28164

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	170
Number of questionnaires returned	60

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	78	20	0	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	70	28	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	37	3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	48	3	0	2
The teaching is good.	83	15	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	72	23	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	15	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	27	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	57	38	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	77	20	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	70	27	3	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	28	13	0	7

## **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**

66. According to their birthday date, children enter one of the two reception classes either in September or January. Therefore, at the time of the inspection there was only one class, of 28 children under the age of five. Most children have attended playgroup or nursery before coming to school and are eased into full-time, school life skilfully, when their age and stages of development are given sensitive consideration. The school's induction process is very effective in providing children and their parents with a smooth and pleasant start to school life while at the same time laying the foundations of home/school relationships. The school continues to nurture and secure a good working partnership with parents through such initiatives as parental school visits, parent interviews and meetings when information about the teaching of language, reading and mathematics is shared with them. As a result of such involvement, parents value the school highly. Recently, parents' heightened awareness of how to help their children at home has had a very positive impact on children's reading and mathematical skills.
67. There has been a good level of improvement in the provision for children under five since the previous inspection. It is now consistently very good. There are several reasons for this. The Foundation Stage is taught and led very well by the early years co-ordinator, who is supported meaningfully by the learning support assistants. All work as an effective team. Members of staff plan a rich curriculum that covers thoroughly all of the required areas of learning. The staff have developed wise strategies, parents are being involved more meaningfully in their children's learning and the outcomes are positive. Mathematics, which was found to be less well developed than other areas of learning at the time of the last inspection, has improved. This is due to the co-ordinator's involvement with pre-school agencies when methods and strategies of how to teach very young children the beginnings of mathematics are shared. These improvements have ensured that teaching and learning are now consistently very good.
68. Particular strengths of teaching include knowledge and understanding of how young children learn and the way this knowledge is put to very good use to plan highly structured and balanced experiences for the children. The teacher's assessment findings about children's learning are also used very well to match provision to their different needs. As well as that, the teacher, together with classroom assistants, form very good caring relationships with the children. The teacher's management of children is excellent. Consequently children are secure, have very good attitudes towards work, and work and behave very well. All of the activities are highly focused, structured and supported both by adults and by skilfully chosen resources. Consequently, children make good progress and raise their attainment from below average at entry to the level expected by the end of reception year in: communication, language and literacy; mathematics; physical education; and knowledge and understanding of the world. Exceptionally, children's attainment in personal, social and emotional development together with creative development rises to above average by the end of the reception year.

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

69. Children's personal, social and emotional development is given very high priority, which enables them to make good progress and attain above the expected level in this area of learning. The quality of teaching is very good. The class teacher and learning support assistants value children, the efforts they make and the responses they give. As a result children feel secure, gain confidence, enjoy their learning and are keen to succeed. They relate very well to each other as they work and play. They dress and undress for physical education lessons with just a little help; self-care is nurtured to good effect. At all times

children strive to obey the classroom rules. An exceptionally orderly but busy learning environment is achieved, within which children behave very well. They play their part willingly in tidying away equipment. A respectful sense of community is fostered when the teacher and children talk about their homes and families. They paint beautiful pictures of their houses and compare them with homes around the world. In this way they learn to respect people from different cultures. Additionally they talk about the winter festivals celebrated by people from a variety of cultures. Understanding is aided by pictures of Diwali, Hanukkah, Mardi Gras and the Chinese New Year. Above all, the class teacher sets a very good example for children to emulate.

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

70. The quality of teaching is excellent. Skills are promoted adeptly through stories, poems, writing and a huge range of explorations and discussions across the curriculum. The class teacher has excellent story telling and reading techniques, which involve the children actively in a full range of reading, writing listening and speaking skills. They listen with full attention to different versions of the children's classic, *Jack and the Beanstalk*. They grasp the sequence well. Whenever possible the children take over the reading and even strengthen their phonic skills as they sound the words of the Giant's rhyme, "Fee fi fo fum", as the story unfolds. The teacher's questioning skills challenge children to think carefully. They respond well and make themselves clear. Interaction between teacher and children is vibrant. They are totally engrossed; the atmosphere is superb. Contributing to this are aptly chosen resources, used by the teacher to support and extend understanding. Every day children take reading books home to share with their parents and add to their reading skills. Alongside reading, speaking, listening and writing skills are fostered well. All of the time the use of language is being fostered carefully. Tasks and activities are highly focused and adapted to suit the children's different abilities. Guidance for adults engaged in helping is carefully imparted, so that everyone knows the purpose of each activity, how to develop it and the language to promote. This is exceptionally good practice, ensuring that everyone is working toward the same goal. Very good methods are used to develop children's writing skills. Consequently, children have a good understanding of their own learning. They read simple texts and have a good grasp of letter sounds. They write one or two sentences about, for example, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, spelling words correctly or as they sound. Extra, exciting occasions also increase their understanding such as their visit to the theatre to see Dick Whittington. Children make very good progress and by the end of the reception year they attain the early learning goals identified for their age in communication, language and literacy.

### **Mathematical development**

71. The quality of teaching mathematical development is very good. Children engage in a wide variety of activities. Very good mathematical opportunities for children to recognise numbers, count, know about shapes and use mathematical vocabulary, are integrated skilfully throughout activities both indoors and out. Out of doors, children arrange themselves into sets of up to five by quickly jumping into hoops. They count, one-to-one, each time to check that they have the required number. Every opportunity is grasped to make children aware of numbers. Problem-solving skills are developed through mental mathematics, by using everyday opportunities as they occur, such as register calculations. Display is used superbly to raise children's awareness of number and shape. When children engage in tasks to practise and improve their skills, they receive invaluable help from the teacher, classroom assistants and parents. Again as in reading and writing, the tasks are matched well to children's different abilities and are highly focused. Children are enthusiastic and work exceptionally hard in games such as 'Number Snap', 'Lotto to 20', and 'Spot the Pairs.' These tasks are challenging but children rise to them, and show a high level of perseverance and in the end satisfaction from their success. Children with special educational needs are supported very well. The teacher and learning support assistant are patient and professional in dealing with specific learning needs. As a result children make good progress and attain the expected level by the end of the reception year. They know the number names and recite them in order and accurately count sets of objects. They count on from a given number and

begin to add and subtract. They recognise, name and describe two and three-dimensional shapes, such as squares, triangles and circles as well as cuboids and spheres.

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

72. Teaching is very good, enabling children to make good progress and attain standards equal to those expected by the end of the reception year. Very worthwhile opportunities are provided for them to be aware of nature. They observe seasonal changes during walks in and around the school grounds. During such walks, they look for signs of autumn in the trees and plants. They collect leaves and when back at school make colourful leaf prints with them. In winter they feed the birds and observe them eating. As a result there is a sizeable group of sparrows living in the hedgerow, which can be heard chattering happily. During spring and summer, children plant and care for plants, some of which are delicate and need special attention. They visit a large outdoor park where they become aware of the life cycle of animals such as the frog. Reception children take part in the school's Harvest Festival, having previously explored fruit and vegetables and made a beautiful harvest display. Such experiences add significantly to children's spiritual development. All the time language is developed. Materials are explored effectively in work linked to early science. Very good opportunities are provided for children to develop computer skills to support and extend their understanding of mathematics and reading. All in all, children are provided with a wealth of experiences to nurture their knowledge and understanding of the world so that they achieve well

### **Physical development**

73. Teaching is very good enabling children to make good progress and attain the expected level by the end of the reception year. Exciting physical education lessons in the hall are thoroughly planned so that children grasp well an awareness of space in routines and games, which involve a variety of movements such as walking and jogging. They are aware of the effect of exercise upon their bodies as shown by their comments, such as "My heart is going fast", and "My body is warm". Warming up and cooling down sessions form part of hall time routines. Children with special educational needs are guided and supported very carefully so that not only do they achieve well but also gain great enjoyment from the lessons. Explanations are very clear and as a result children know exactly what to do. They are very secure, very well behaved and enjoy the lesson greatly. Little giggles of pleasure were heard as they tried to balance beanbags on different parts of their bodies. All the faces were smiling. Children follow instructions well and demonstrate a good range of control and co-ordination. The outdoor play area adds to children's physical development as they ride on tricycles and other wheeled vehicles. When visiting the nearby park they climb and balance on the large apparatus. Children are given many opportunities to strengthen their fingers so that they use scissors, pencils, paintbrushes and a variety of construction toys well. Staff are diligent about keeping children safe in movement lessons and when handling tools.

### **Creative development**

74. The quality of teaching is very good. Creative development is nurtured profitably through stimulating activities involving art and design, music, dance and imaginative play. Children paint bold, colourful pictures of their houses and show their skills of patterning in marbling, printing and weaving. Work is planned very carefully and lessons have clear aims for learning very well. As a result activities are highly structured and purposeful, while at the same time giving children great scope to be creative and independent. This shows not only the teacher's very good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum, but also her insight into how young children learn. They choose their materials from a good supply and produce individual, imaginative creations as may be seen from viewing their art gallery. They are building a huge repertoire of songs, many of them with actions, which they carry out enjoyably, remembering the words by heart. They sing songs melodiously such as *Wind the Bobbin Up*, and *Jelly on*

*the Plate*. They follow the conductor well as they represent the characters of *Jack and the Beanstalk* by playing a variety of percussion instruments such as cowbells, wooden-claves and triangles to achieve a very effective outcome. Good opportunities, such as the 'Christmas Play', give children the chance to perform to an audience. As well as that, they engage well in role-play pretending to be characters in the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. In developing creativity, children are highly motivated. As a result, they make good progress and attain above the expected standards by the end of the reception year.

## ENGLISH

75. By the end of Year 2, standards attained by pupils are average. This has maintained English standards since the last inspection. Trends over time show pupils' attainments in the national tests to be reasonably stable and in line with the national average. The exception to this is the attainment made by more able pupils. Too few of the more able pupils attain the above average standards of which they are capable. The school is aware of this and has been addressing it by providing extra tuition for the more able pupils with some success, as the attainment trend is beginning to turn upwards. However, in spite of the school's efforts, there are still too few pupils who attain higher standards in reading and writing.
76. In writing, teachers provide a thorough grounding through a well-planned curriculum, which gives pupils good opportunities to write in a variety of forms for different purposes. Pupils' are greatly benefited by visits to aptly chosen places of interest, giving them a source of knowledge and understanding to draw upon and add meaning and order to their writing. For example, Year 1 pupils' descriptions of what it is like in the 'Outwoods' are detailed and well ordered, while Year 2 pupils' creative stories about 'Castle Adventures' are influenced positively by their trip to Tamworth Castle. In literacy lessons, teachers are diligent in encouraging good habits in the use of punctuation, grammar, spelling, handwriting and vocabulary. They use very good methods, and well-prepared resources, including computers, to nurture these skills. As a result, pupils make good progress. They write legibly, spell words correctly or as they sound, often use full stops and capital letters, and mostly use the correct tense and a suitable variety of words. Additionally, they structure their writing well.
77. Therefore, by the end of Year 2 most pupils' attainment in writing is average. However, too few more able pupils raise their attainment to reach higher standards. There are clear reasons for this that relate to the development of pupils' writing style that hinder opportunities for more advanced work. Many pupils are not secure in using a variety of joining words to form complex and compound sentences and thus add explanation and greater clarity to their writing. Additionally, sentence starters are repetitive and pronouns are rarely used causing the writing to be pedantic. Also, although some adjectives and adverbs are most certainly used, there are too few to create sufficient variety and interest. Significantly, pupils' skills of creating interest, suspense, humour or sadness in their writing are not well enough advanced. This is because, when organising their writing, they seldom include descriptions of characters' feelings, causing a lack of atmosphere in their work. Although day-to-day marking is thorough and assigning levels to pupils' work is carried out rigorously, the findings from such activities are not used thoroughly enough to set specific targets and reflect them in planning in order to nurture the individual skills of the more able pupils.
78. Pupils perform similarly in reading so that they make good progress and attain average standards by the end of Year 2. Reading resources have improved greatly since the previous inspection. Pupils build their skills through a good variety of reading schemes, covering both fiction and non-fiction titles. They also enjoy a fine selection of large teaching books, shared with them during direct teaching and story telling sessions. They listen with rapt interest when being read to. A very good example of this was in a Year 2 class when pupils were wide-eyed with suspense over the fate of a lamb, which had been left out in the snow. Such engaging response is due to exceptionally high quality teaching techniques in sharing a story with pupils.

79. Another significant improvement since the previous inspection, and one valued highly by the school, is the help given by parents to improve their children's reading skills at home. Pupils take books home each evening, chosen from a wide selection in each classroom, together with a home/school diary, where parents and teachers make comments about progress and achievement. To all involved, this is a very positive process, which has undoubtedly added to pupils' skills. The resultant effect of such increased provision is seen in pupils' good attitudes toward reading. Pupils enjoy reading at home and have begun to form preferences. Most have a favourite book such as *Dolphin Boy* and *Animal Treasury*. They also choose to read magazines and comics suitable for their age group.
80. In lessons, knowledge of letter sounds is constantly built up, adding to pupils' good ability to make sense of unfamiliar words and read with increasing accuracy and fluency. For this purpose teachers provide pupils with individual white boards, enabling them to practise their skills readily and profitably during lessons. Pupils are given good opportunities to read and talk about what they have read in both large and small reading groups. Good understanding is shown not only by their responses, but also by their questions.
81. However, at the end of Year 2, too few of the more able pupils attain higher standards. This is due mainly to higher order skills of research being underdeveloped, so that pupils cannot readily locate a specific book in the library. Additionally, they are insecure in using their knowledge of alphabetical order to locate information when using an index or dictionary. Pupils are unclear about the use and meaning of book vocabulary such as contents, fiction, non-fiction and, as mentioned, index. Even so, pupils are building sound comprehension skills not least through discussing stories, when they take part wholeheartedly, demonstrating their speaking and listening skills.
82. Pupils make good progress and by the end of Year 2, speaking and listening skills are good. When discussing as a class, small group or in pairs, pupils show great enthusiasm, listen to others' contributions and build upon what is being said. Very polite speaking and listening habits are nurtured throughout the school resulting in orderly, productive learning occasions. Teachers and classroom assistants are very good examples for pupils to emulate. Relationships are warm and secure. Pupils know that their contributions will be valued and therefore interact confidently and responsibly. The subject co-ordinator is proactive in giving pupils meaningful experiences to enhance skills such as attending the junior school's production of *Jonah Man Jazz* and the theatre production of *Dick Whittington*. Teachers' effective use of activities such as drama contributes to good standards in speaking and listening.
83. The quality of teaching is good, with particular strengths in relationships. Very good relationships, fostered between teachers and pupils, produce an exceptionally orderly and respectful learning environment within which pupils work very hard and behave very well and at times excellently. Additionally, teachers employ very good methods in teaching the different aspects of English and promote understanding by using learning resources aptly. Careful planning in year groups ensures that the curriculum is broad, balanced, relevant and built upon step by step. The quality of planning has improved since the previous inspection when there were ineffective examples. Now it is good, and in this secure planning framework, lessons have consistently clear learning objectives, which guide the learning focus well. As a result pupils know from the outset what they will learn and what is expected of them. This gives them a good understanding of their own learning.
84. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and understanding; she supports teachers and classroom assistants well. She demonstrates, to good advantage, aspects of teaching which the school is endeavouring to improve. The governing body's decision to have single age classes, each of which is supported profitably by a classroom assistant, also contributes significantly to the quality of pupils' learning.

## MATHEMATICS

85. Standards in mathematics are in line with the national average by the end of Year 2. This is similar to the findings of the previous inspection. Since then, there have been some year-on-year variations in pupils' attainment. However, there has been a marked improvement and this inspection shows that the trend is strong and securely based. Pupils' performance now matches the average expected for pupils aged seven. Pupils' achievement throughout the school is good except for higher attaining pupils. Although work is planned to meet their needs in Year 2 lessons, this usually takes the form of extension activities that are undertaken after these more able pupils have finished the work planned for those of average ability. The higher attaining pupils find the latter comparatively easy and most do not get to the extension activities that would be challenging and developmentally worthwhile for them.
86. The improvements result from strengths in teaching, planning and the quality of subject management. The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. Relationships in lessons are excellent. Teachers manage pupils with sensitivity and skill. This makes for a positive, purposeful learning environment that gives pupils satisfaction in learning and promotes good progress. Teachers give balanced attention to the different aspects of mathematics, ensuring that pupils become confident in a suitably wide range of knowledge and skills. Mental mathematics sessions are lively and encouraging and teachers are careful to involve all pupils. A good balance is struck between oral and written work. Teachers present lessons effectively, capturing pupils' interest and enabling them to work confidently. Whole class sessions are constructive and build on what pupils have learned during each lesson, promoting good progress for most of the pupils. Teachers are quick to commend and value pupils' contributions. This increases pupils' self-esteem, giving them the confidence to think for themselves, explain their answers and ask questions of their own.
87. Pupils in Year 2 have a secure grasp of number facts and are developing a sound understanding of place value. For example, they identify and complete number sequences, work with addition and subtraction at an appropriate level and use mental calculation to solve number problems. Pupils recognise a number of common two- and three-dimensional shapes and describe their distinguishing features. They begin to use and understand some standard units, for example of length. Average and above average pupils know how to show information, such as the pets owned by pupils in their class, on a block chart and can interpret this information at a satisfactory level. Pupils' ability to use and apply mathematics is satisfactory. It is becoming more flexible and secure because teachers now have better informed strategies for improving this aspect of pupils' learning and plan with these in mind.
88. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils of all abilities are attentive in lessons and enthusiastic about learning. They settle quickly to work, concentrate hard and take pride in working accurately. They work sensibly alongside one another, co-operate supportively on group tasks, for example at the computer, and behave very well.
89. Lower ability pupils and pupils with special educational needs make consistently good progress in lessons because they are well supported by the teachers and classroom assistants. Teachers make detailed assessments of pupils' attainments in mathematics, both during lessons and over time, and track pupils' progress carefully. However, they do not make enough use of this information to guide their lesson planning. This means that the needs of higher attaining pupils, in particular, are not always accurately met. Work is sometimes too easy and offers too little challenge and interest to the most able. This is reflected in the school's results which show that a lower than average proportion of pupils reaches the higher levels.
90. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject co-ordinator, with other staff, has analysed in detail the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' previous attainment. Drawing on outside advice, she has targeted several areas for improvement and implemented purposeful action through the school. This includes, for example, teaching pupils to use

jottings to spell out the ways in which they arrive at answers. This helps pupils clarify their mathematical thinking and develop ways of solving problems. The strong emphasis in oral sessions on using mathematical language and encouraging pupils to explain why they chose a certain method of working or how they reached their answer is beginning to promote good progress. This is a marked improvement over the findings of the previous inspection when there were too few opportunities for pupils to develop these skills.

## SCIENCE

91. By the time pupils reach the age of seven standards in science are well on course to meet with national expectations by the end of the present school year. This is reflected in the school's latest results for science, which showed that the teachers' assessment of pupils' science attainment was close to the average for seven year olds. Their attainment has improved since the previous inspection, when progress and attainment in some areas of the science curriculum were judged to be unsatisfactory. The school has worked hard on raising attainments in experimental and investigative science and pupils now carry out a good range of first-hand investigations and show a satisfactory understanding of fair scientific testing.
92. Year 1 pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of life and living processes. Their understanding grows through planned activities that require pupils to categorise animals into groups of similar characteristics, for example, those with no legs, two legs, four legs or more than four legs so that an early comprehension of how animals and plants are classified begins to develop. The Year 2 pupils show a sound understanding that the uses of materials are closely linked with their properties. For example, they understand that wood is used for making furniture because it is strong and can be carved into different shapes. They also know that certain materials will return to their original shape when a force is applied to them. For instance, they were able to explain that a foam sponge and a rubber band would go back to the shape they originally had after they had been squeezed or stretched.
93. The quality of science teaching is good. This has enabled pupils to achieve well in science and to grow quickly in their knowledge and understanding of the subject. The pupils' good learning has been facilitated by the provision of a wide range of investigations and experiments for them to learn scientific ideas from direct experiences. Teachers support this by asking questions that test, confirm and extend pupils' understanding. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils result in hard work and good concentration because pupils want to please their teachers. Such high productivity and good pace of working in the classroom has a good impact on learning. Science lessons are well planned and have clear aims for pupils that are shared with the class at the beginning of lessons. This enables pupils to have a clear focus on what they are expected to know, do or understand by the end of the lesson and has a positive impact on their learning. In addition, teachers use the local environment effectively to enable pupils to learn about plants and animals. They use the local Outwoods and the wild area, including the school pond, to provide first-hand learning experiences for pupils to develop their knowledge of plants and animals. Higher attaining pupils are challenged well by posing questions that stimulate their thinking and develop their understanding of scientific ideas. For example, in an interesting science lesson for pupils in Year 2 that focused on identifying the changes that occur when ice cubes melt, the higher attaining pupils were posed a number of challenging questions. They were asked to find out ways that would slow down or speed up the melting process. The slowing down of the melting process presented greater difficulty but after deliberation the pupils decided that insulation such as layers of wool or other fabric would slow the melting process. In addition, the pupils of average ability are challenged well and the lower attaining pupils are well supported because classroom assistants liaise closely with class teachers, before and after lessons, in order to ensure good progress.
94. The science co-ordinator provides good leadership and management and has ensured that there has been a clear focus on improving pupils' attainments in experimental and investigative science. Teachers keep a careful track of pupils' progress by assessing and

recording their knowledge and understanding at the end of each unit of study. The co-ordinator also monitors the planning for every class to ensure that each one covers the required curriculum. Science teaching is monitored regularly when the subject is a focus of the school development plan. This enables a good view of the quality of teaching at the time.

## ART AND DESIGN

95. Since the previous inspection, attainment levels have risen from the expected level to above that expected for seven year old pupils. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in building artistic skills, knowledge and understanding. There are significant reasons for this. The subject is led and managed well by a co-ordinator who has expertise in and enthusiasm for art and design. The school now has a well-structured scheme of work, which guides teaching and learning efficiently and includes all the National Curriculum requirements. As part of the improvements the co-ordinator has monitored teaching and will do so again to gauge the continuing effectiveness of the new guidelines. Subsequently, the quality of teaching and learning has improved.
96. In the previous inspection the quality of teaching was satisfactory; now it is good. This improved quality of teaching is reflected in pupils' good attitudes towards work and as indicated above, increased attainment levels. Pupils of Year 1 make large, bold paintings of their holidays, featuring, for example, children swimming and boating. In Year 2 their castle pictures show increased detail, subtlety of colour and definition of shape. Paint mixing skills are fostered constantly and build effectively. In the summer term all pupils take part with great enthusiasm in the School Painting Competition, when pupils are involved in the judging. It is a great event for pupils and staff alike. Not only does it celebrate pupils' success, but serves as a good opportunity for the co-ordinator to take a thorough look at how they are progressing.
97. Drawing skills show good progression. Year 1 pupils draw good self-portraits and careful observational pencil line drawings of leaves showing a good level of detail. Year 2 pupils make good observational pencil drawings of castles with detailed features. They work in different media such as pencils and crayons. Materials are good for the purpose.
98. Besides drawing and painting, a good variety of techniques are developed through a rich curriculum. Pupils of Year 1 practise making patterns using potato prints to form and shape caterpillars, while pupils of Year 2 progress to Rangoli patterns, pastel coloured patterns, and boldly coloured geometric tessellating patterns. The MLD Unit pupils made a splendid, collaborative hedgehog, showing the quills impressively. Pupils also work in clay, and Year 1 pupils' beautifully moulded and decorated autumn leaves and Year 2 pupils' created 'Rainbow Fish' showed good form and intricate decoration.
99. Textiles are used well to result in good outcomes. For example, in Year 1 pupils made calendars using felt and sequins, which they stitched together carefully, to very pleasing effect. In Year 2, pupils used collage skills effectively to make sea creatures when studying the book *Rainbow Fish*. They chose from a wide a variety of colours of tissue paper and wool and highlighted their work using silver foil. Pupils in the MLD Unit also represent stories and poems in art very effectively, such as their splendid owls from the story *Whatever Next* and superb spiders from the rhymes *Incy Wincy Spider* and *Little Miss Muffet*. Altogether, the techniques of pattern making, leaf rubbing, marbling, pottery and collage are developed well.
100. Good opportunities are given for pupils to work after the style of celebrated artists. Year 1 pupils made impressive 'Cat' paintings emulating the style of Pablo Picasso and Theophile Steinlen while Year 2 pupils painted 'Sunflowers' after the style of Van Gogh. Pupils' work is displayed to advantage around the school, promoting their self-esteem and creating a colourful, vibrant learning environment. Some of the pupils' work has been framed and hangs in pride of place in the corridors and library. These include 'A Sea Picture' effectively painted by a Year 1 boy and a beautiful still-life painting of 'A Vase of Flowers' by a Year 2 girl. Pupils'

spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered very well through their work in art and design.

101. The co-ordinator has audited the school's resources thoroughly and added to them, ensuring that they match the areas of learning being covered. She provides good leadership and management, enabling the subject to develop well. Resources are in good supply. Methods for measuring how well pupils are learning are being developed in accordance with the scheme of work. The co-ordinator actively promotes the subject and has plans to develop an art and design portfolio representing the stages of development in the different skills.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

102. Standards in design and technology are above average by the end of Year 2. This is confirmed by analysis of pupils' recent work and by the standards of work seen in lessons. This is a very significant improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be below average. Pupils' achievement is very good. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress.
103. At the time of the previous inspection, teachers gave too few opportunities for pupils to plan, make and evaluate; finished products were of an unsatisfactory standard and pupils did not work accurately enough. Teachers have successfully addressed all of these former shortcomings. The quality of teaching is now good and sometimes very good. Pupils have well-planned, interesting opportunities to design, make and evaluate. They work to a good level of accuracy and take great pride in the quality of their finished product.
104. By the end of Year 2, pupils complete a satisfactory range of interesting projects. Teachers plan and sequence these to build pupils' skills in designing and making and, often, to link constructively with work in other subjects. For example, Year 1 pupils plan and make a box-fold card and draw and write to show their planning for a creature incorporating sliding mechanisms. Year 2 pupils make careful plans, specifying the materials and tools they will need, for vehicles with fixed axles. They spell out the stages of making clearly, using diagrams and accurate labelling. In a very well planned design and making project, Year 2 pupils made a bag. They started by studying the features and construction of some commercially available products before deciding the form and use of the bag they would make. Pupils planned very carefully, specifying materials and explaining by accurate diagrams and descriptions how the process of making would be sequenced. The quality of pupils' work was good. It reflected care in making and imagination in the way pupils gave their bags individual character by choosing materials, colour and decoration. As they worked, pupils considered ways in which their product might be improved, and made changes. In a final discussion, they compared and evaluated their work and considered any adjustments they might make.
105. Teachers manage pupils very well and plan projects that improve pupils' attainment and give them satisfaction in their work. A strong feature of teaching is the careful attention teachers give to the process of design and making, from early planning to final product. This gives pupils a real understanding of the stages in production and the way they can be sequenced. By planning rewarding tasks, teachers give pupils enjoyment in learning and the satisfaction of bringing a project to fruition. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils of all abilities behave very well and work carefully. They support each other well and are appreciative of each other's work.
106. The planning for design and technology is good and there are satisfactory arrangements for assessing pupils' progress. The management and leadership of the subject are good. The subject co-ordinator, appointed since the last inspection, has been very influential in improving standards. She has achieved this by bringing enthusiasm and energy to the subject, implementing improved planning arrangements and supporting her colleagues well.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

107. Pupils' attainment in geography is in line with the expected levels for the end of Year 2. Standards have fallen since the last inspection when attainment was above average. The school's timetabling arrangements meant that no geography lessons were seen during this inspection. Analysis of teachers' planning, pupils' recent work and the standards that pupils attain suggest that provision is satisfactory. Pupils' achievement, including that of pupils with special educational needs, is satisfactory.
108. Teachers' planning shows that pupils study their own locality and some contrasting places, such as a seaside resort and the African Savannah, and learn to use some geographical vocabulary. This is reflected in pupils' past work. Teachers involve ICT in relevant ways, for example to improve pupils' understanding of directions and simple map-work. They create attractive classroom displays that inform and motivate pupils. Well-planned fieldwork within the locality brings immediacy and impact to some aspects of pupils' learning. This improves pupils' understanding of, for example, the effects on the landscape of weather and seasonal change. Using the available evidence of planning, pupils' past work and discussions with staff, the quality of teaching is sound.
109. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a sound understanding of their own locality and some of its features, including buildings and services. They comment on the quality of life in Ibstock and in the neighbourhood of their homes, identifying aspects that they like such as quietness, pleasant people and natural features including woodland and a stream. They make soundly detailed studies of buildings, referring to, for example, the size, colour and shape of bricks. The more able pupils consider ways in which their local environment might be improved, suggesting, for example, planting more trees and dealing more effectively with litter. They name accurately the countries of the UK and colour them on a map, showing the position of Ibstock and London. Most pupils understand that physical conditions vary greatly from one part of the world to another and recognise, for example, that differences in climate influence the types of clothes people wear. However, pupils are not confident enough in comparing different places they have studied or in handling geographical questions.
110. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. In discussion, Year 2 pupils showed interest in the study of different places, including their own locality. Pupils took turns, listened carefully to each other's suggestions and behaved very well.
111. The planning for geography ensures that pupils cover a range of relevant topics but does not show clearly enough how pupils are to progress. Assessment arrangements for the subject are not sufficiently accurate and objective. The subject co-ordinator has satisfactory knowledge and is enthusiastic but has not yet had an opportunity to monitor teaching and learning and therefore there is limited opportunity for impact. These shortcomings in the school's arrangements slow pupils' progress. The leadership and management of geography are satisfactory.

## **HISTORY**

112. The attainment of pupils by the time they reach the age of seven meets expectations for this age group. This has maintained the attainment level at the time of the previous inspection and enables pupils to achieve well.
113. Pupils understand the reasons for aspects of castles such as arrow slits, battlements, a portcullis, a moat and a keep. They can explain the design of castles included the above in terms of safety and defence of the castle. They have a good knowledge of a number of significant historical characters. They know, for example, of the failed plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament by Guy Fawkes and others. Pupils also have a good knowledge of the work of Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War and of Grace Darling's bravery in the face of adversity. Their development of skills in history is also at the level expected for seven

year olds because they have the ability to discover aspects of the past using historical sources such as books, sites and old photographs. The use of simple time lines has enabled pupils to begin to develop a sense of chronology by sequencing events and objects.

114. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan pupils' work so that they are provided with opportunities to reinforce their knowledge and understanding of work in history. For example, they draw and label pictures of a castle to consolidate their knowledge of the different parts, write stories about a castle adventure in literacy lessons so that the vocabulary is used in a different context, and make large scale models of a castle in design and technology lessons. Teachers provide very clear instructions on what pupils are expected to do and this enables pupils to have a good pace of working because they are provided with a clear sense of purpose. Very good relationships between the class teacher and pupils result in very good efforts because pupils want to please their teacher. This leads to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding in history and to most pupils being challenged satisfactorily in their learning. Classroom assistants and class teachers work very closely together and this good collaboration between them ensures that pupils with special educational needs and those of average attainment make good progress. However, higher attaining pupils are often not extended sufficiently because the work planned does not extend their thinking enough. Good techniques are used to promote interest amongst the pupils. For example, role-play was used to good effect when the teacher pretended she had been transported from a medieval castle to a classroom in St Denys' School and when pupils were asked to lie down on the floor and pretend they were in a crowded military hospital ward during the Crimean War. Resources for learning are also used effectively. For instance, pupils examined photographs of life in Victorian England such as street scenes, inside a shop or pupils in a typical classroom. Pupils identified differences between then and now and in doing so had a greater understanding of the changes that had taken place over the course of time.
115. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Monitoring of history lessons has occurred recently and this has had some impact on the pupils' progress. There is a new scheme of work and policy that have both been recently written to replace the old ones and this has given a good framework on which history lessons can be planned. Coverage of the curriculum is not checked sufficiently so that the school knows whether pupils in every class are learning the same history content as others in their year group.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

116. Pupils' attainment in ICT meets the expected standard by the end of Year 2. This is similar to the findings of the previous inspection. Since then, resources have improved and teachers have kept pace with developments in the subject through relevant in-service training. Only one complete lesson could be seen during the inspection, but other criteria on the quality of teaching have been used to make judgements. However, the indications from discussion with pupils, analysis of pupils' recent work and teachers' planning documentation are that provision is good and pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. By the end of Year 2, average and more able pupils are suitably adept in using the keyboard and mouse. They use word-processing to record and improve the quality of their writing, using, for example, command keys such as 'shift', 'backspace,' 'enter' and some different fonts. They edit text and re-order sentences and organise graphic elements to make simple images, for example, of a desert island. In conversation, pupils were enthusiastic about their ICT work and enjoyed talking about it. Their attitudes to learning are very good. They took turns in discussion, supported each other well and behaved very well. The more able pupils, and those who had gained added experience at home, were very confident in giving basic instructions, understood the importance of precise commands and explained, for example, how to save and print their work. They showed some understanding of the value and limitations of computers, such as their usefulness in presenting work neatly and in allowing mistakes to be corrected quickly. They also appreciated that technical problems could interrupt tasks and result in loss of information.

117. Teachers plan good opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills in support of other subjects. For example, the work pupils follow up in programming the floor robot helps them with aspects of their mathematics and with their understanding of direction in geography. In the lesson seen, the teacher showed secure subject knowledge. She was skilful in sustaining pupils' interest and explaining the use of the *Colour Magic* program to create a picture for the Christmas card pupils were making in design and technology. Her confident demonstrations enabled pupils to learn well and her well-judged questioning verified and extended their knowledge. Other evidence showed that teaching is good. Pupils' skills have been well taught and their very high interest level and enthusiasm about ICT show that the teaching they have received has successfully achieved good learning.
118. The leadership and management of the subject are good and have been influential in maintaining standards and promoting good achievement. The subject leader has kept pace with developments and is enthusiastic and well organised. Effective procedures are in hand to ensure that pupils are safeguarded whenever they use the Internet. Planning is good, showing clearly how pupils will progress in the subject and providing useful guidance to teachers on how ICT is to be used in other subjects. Assessment arrangements are clear, secure and practical. A good feature is the involvement of pupils in their own learning by colouring in an assessment record of their own. This gives pupils the satisfaction of charting their own achievement and enables them to look forward to future progress.

## MUSIC

119. The attainment of the school's seven year old pupils meets national expectations for their age. This maintains the attainment at the time of the last inspection. Pupils enjoy singing and most sing in tune enthusiastically. Pupils, for example, sing *Choose an instrument you can play* or *Long Tail* and in so doing they listen to each other well so that they keep in time with each other. They sing with a good sense of pulse but this successful steady beat does not transfer itself to when they play percussion instruments. For instance, when pupils played drums, a guiro, a maraca or simply clapped their hands to accompany a song or piece of instrumental music, they found difficulty in keeping to the pulse of the music. However, pupils are developing a sound understanding of rhythm and recognise and match sequences of long and short notes to symbols written on cards. They also recognise successfully the sounds and can identify the names of a range of different musical instruments when undertaking listening activities.
120. The quality of teaching is sound. Teachers have a good rapport with pupils and as a result pupils enjoy pleasing their teacher and their behaviour is good. The very good relationships in the classroom also enable good concentration and a good level of interest from pupils. This has a positive impact on their acquisition of skills such as learning new songs, building rhythms and writing different forms of symbols as a way of recording music on paper. Sometimes the pace of lesson slows considerably when most pupils are not involved in playing musical instruments and have to wait for long periods of time for their turn. Some teachers have good strategies to maintain pupils' interest. For example, in one good lesson the teacher held a card in the air bearing symbols that represented a specific rhythm. The pupils sang the arrangement on one note and the teacher attempted to identify the rhythm. This provided much excitement and the pupils had their understanding reinforced by the teacher when she identified the rhythm correctly. Good strategies are also used to encourage pupils to listen very carefully. They sing *The Crocodile* song very sensitively and in so doing they are encouraged to listen hard to each other so they can mirror the volume and keep the singing 'tight' and produce a neat and pleasing sound. The teacher also encourages them to play the game 'Who's that knocking on my door?' This enables pupils to develop careful listening skills because they are blindfolded and have to listen to a fellow pupil saying a few words whilst guessing who the speaker is.
121. The music co-ordinator designate cannot yet take over fully the development of music in the school because she is still in her first year of teaching. Class teachers have only recently

taken over the responsibility for teaching music because a specialist music teacher used to cover all classes on Thursday afternoons. Music workshops have been arranged for and attended by teachers so that they, as non-specialists, can feel more secure. In addition, a new music scheme has been purchased and adapted to national guidance. It is to the credit of the teaching staff that they have adapted so quickly and that standards have been maintained from the last inspection. Collectively the school has a good range and quantity of musical instruments. However, each class has its own personal collection of instruments and the resulting number of available instruments does not allow each individual pupil enough time for direct experience of making music.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

122. During the course of the inspection the lessons seen were solely games. No gymnastics or dance lessons were observed during the inspection. Pupils' attainments in physical education at the age of seven were at a level that was at the expected level for this age group. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the standards pupils reach in gymnastics or dance activities.
123. Pupils are able to travel along the floor in a variety of ways. They skip, run, walk backwards and sideways and move via a series of small or long jumps. This is done with good co-ordination between arms and legs and with reasonable balance. Pupils have a satisfactory ability to move about the hall quickly, avoiding collisions with each other and finding spaces to move into. They throw a ball accurately over short distances but find it difficult to judge the strength of the throw to make it convenient for a partner to catch it. Their skills at controlling a ball with their feet whilst on the move are developing quickly and some can run quickly, keeping the ball close to their feet. However, many pupils have difficulty with bouncing a large ball whilst travelling. At the end of the lesson pupils behaved very sensibly and cleared away all of the small items of equipment quickly and stored them tidily and efficiently.
124. The quality of teaching is sound. Teachers provide good warm-up sessions for pupils and include a good range of energetic activities that result successfully in pupils becoming breathless. There are precise explanations provided for pupils on the 'mechanics' of the activities planned and this enables pupils to be confident in what they are doing. Good management of pupils' behaviour and very good relationships between the teacher and the class result in hard work, enthusiasm and good concentration from the pupils. The pace of the lessons slows when teachers divide the class into two groups with one group passively observing the other group in order to make constructive criticism. Too much time is spent in sorting the class into two groups. Likewise, too much time is spent on sorting pupils into teams and this limits the amount of time that can be spent on improving physical skills in a competitive situation. Occasionally teachers appoint team captains and allow these to select pupils for their team. This is not good practice because it is an obviously uncomfortable experience for the few pupils who have not yet been chosen near the end of the selection process. Teachers provide good demonstrations of how to throw or catch a ball and this gives pupils a better idea of how to acquire these skills themselves. Teachers move about the hall, continuously assessing pupils' performances and providing good advice on how to improve. This has a good impact on pupils' learning.
125. The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership and management and has ensured that the subject has been well resourced over the last few years. There is a very good policy and scheme of work, which are comprehensive and act as a good framework for teachers' planning. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and works hard on behalf of the pupils. She runs a very popular gymnastics club that is held after school for Year 2 pupils and Year 1 pupils will have their opportunity during next term. The governor who has oversight of physical education often monitors lessons and reports back in written form to the governing body at subsequent meetings. Teachers have received useful in-service training and as a result are now more confident in teaching games and dance. Pupils with special educational needs from

the MLD Unit are integrated into mainstream class lessons whenever appropriate and are well supported on these occasions.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

126. Pupils throughout the school make good progress in learning about Christian and other world faiths within a highly exemplary atmosphere of respect, care and reverence. By the end of Year 2 they attain in accordance with the expectations set out in the guidelines from the local education authority on what should be taught in religious education. This has maintained the attainment level at the time of the last inspection. The school hall, where all pupils, including the youngest and those from the MLD Unit gather to worship, is decorated with beautiful displays representing key celebrations of several different faiths. These serve not only to enhance the environment, but to reinforce learning. Year 1 pupils' work on the Jewish Festival of Hanukkah contributes to the display and reminds them of what they have learned. Year 2 pupils' artwork on Diwali, the Hindu festival of light, depicts the Diwali message very effectively. The pupils of the MLD Unit also contribute to the displays, making them feel part of the school community. As Christmas was approaching, the Nativity scene and Advent were being studied wholeheartedly and the hall displays promote understanding skilfully. The meaning behind the symbols of the Advent candles was explained clearly in the displays and by their responses to questions, pupils showed that they had grasped it.
127. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan well from the school's new, very clear guidelines drawn up to include the reception children's curriculum as well as that of Years 1 and 2. Very good relationships are fostered between teachers and pupils so that pupils work and behave very well. Teachers bring meaning to pupils' learning by their very good choice and careful preparation of resources. This was evident in lessons across the school. In a Year 2 class a rich assortment of artefacts including an Advent ring, Christingle candle, Advent calendars and Christmas cards were shared with the pupils to show how Christians mark the time until the birth of Jesus. In a Year 1 class, pupils enjoyed looking at a model of the stable complete with the characters of the Christmas story. They listened carefully to the story, watching the pictures with interest as the class teacher read. As a result of such suitable provision, pupils have a good understanding of the Christmas story.
128. This is the case with other Bible stories too. Year 1 pupils know, for example, the story of Moses leading his people out of Egypt while pupils of Year 2 know about Jonah. They visit a local church and understand how the building is used for different Christian celebrations and ceremonies such as Easter and Christmas. They take part in the Christingle service held at the church and led by a member of the teaching staff. They greatly enjoy joining in the festivals of Christmas, Easter and Harvest and are encouraged strongly to respect the festivals of Judaism and Hinduism. As a result, pupils have very good attitudes toward religious education.
129. Religious education is led and managed well by the head teacher, who brings a wealth of knowledge and understanding to the subject, influencing teaching and learning very positively, not least by the provision of thorough planning for each age group. Due to the high commitment to religious education and the efforts of all of the staff, the subject adds very positively to pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.