

INSPECTION REPORT

WOODCROFT FIRST SCHOOL

Leek, Staffordshire

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124152

Headteacher: Mrs S R Cartlidge

Reporting inspector: Mrs C McBride
2810

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 5th June 2003

Inspection number: 248556

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wallbridge Drive Leek Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST13 8JG
Telephone number:	01538 483186
Fax number:	01538 483189
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Ann Knobbs
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2810	Mrs C McBride	Registered inspector	The Foundation Stage Information and communication technology Equal opportunities Educational inclusion	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management Key issues for action
9843	Mrs S Drake	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
18370	Mr K Johnson	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Geography Music	
32203	Mrs E O'Reilly	Team inspector	English Religious education Art and design Special educational needs	
30078	Mr R Powell	Team inspector	Science History Physical education	Quality and range of opportunities for learning

The inspection contractor was:

Primary Associates Limited
Suite 13
West Lancashire Technology Management Centre
Moss Lane View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TN

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway

London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is average in size and is situated in the town of Leek, Staffordshire, on the edge of the Peak District. The vast majority of the local population are from white, British backgrounds, and the school's roll reflects this. The proportion of pupils eligible to claim free school meals (4 per cent) is below the average for most schools. A well below average proportion of pupils (7 per cent) is identified with special educational needs, including statements. Their needs cover a wide range with no overall predominant difficulty. The school has no nursery, but almost all children attend local playgroups or private nurseries before starting. The 223 pupils on roll are between the ages of 4 and 9 years, and 18 currently attend part-time in the 'Early Years' class. The Foundation Stage in the school comprises an 'Early Years' class, and three classes of reception age children; two of these are mixed age classes where pupils are taught with others from Year 1. The school's arrangements for admission mean that those who start in September receive one term in the 'Early Years' class and two terms in reception. Those who are admitted in January receive two terms in 'Early Years' followed by three terms in reception. When they start school, the majority of children show attainment in line with that expected for their age, but their skills in language and communication and in personal and social development are better than those typically seen.

The school's success in national tests was recognised by the Department for Education and Skills in 2000 and 2002 with a School Achievement Award. It gained the Basic Skills Award December 2002; the status of 'Eco School' in 2001, and it is a pilot school for the Inclusive School Quality Mark, which requires the school to fully integrate pupils with a high degree of learning difficulty into mainstream classes.

The current headteacher took up post in September 2001, having previously been deputy headteacher at the school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school, which is effective in enabling all pupils to make good progress in their learning and to achieve very high standards in their personal development. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is good and relationships are of very high quality. Pupils are offered an interesting and varied curriculum, which is well suited to their needs; the school provides a caring environment, which gives them many opportunities to flourish and develop mature, responsible attitudes. Good leadership and management by the headteacher, key staff and governors ensure that the school's main aims are achieved and that it gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Achieves above average standards in English, science, design and technology, physical education and music;
- Helps children to develop as independent, caring, well rounded individuals, with mature, sensible attitudes for their age;
- Values and maintains the confidence and support of its parents;
- Works hard to remove barriers to pupils' learning and provides an environment where all children can do well.

What could be improved

- Standards of neatness and presentation in pupil's work;
- The school needs to sharpen the ways it monitors and evaluates the quality of its work.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has achieved a sound rate of improvement since it was last inspected in November 1997, and it has a good capacity for future improvement. Standards in some subjects such as English,

science, design and technology and music are now higher. Other aspects of its work such as its provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are also better than they were. There is still scope for improvement in pupils' handwriting and presentation. The proportion of high quality lessons has doubled, although marking of pupils' work could still be improved further. Governors are now much more actively involved than they were in setting the direction for the school's work and in strategic planning. Although the school has made a good start in monitoring teaching and learning, this still needs sharpening up.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
reading	A	C	A	A	well above average A above average B
writing	B	D	B	C	average C below average D
mathematics	A	D	B	C	well below average E

The school has maintained a better performance than most others over the past three years except in 2001 when there were more pupils with special educational needs in the Year 2 class. Inspection findings match this pleasing picture and show that throughout the school, standards in reading are highest. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are well above average, although standards in handwriting and presentation of work could be higher.

In mathematics, pupils reach average standards with particular strengths in investigative work. Standards in science are above average throughout the school, and again, investigative work is strong. In these subjects the school is keeping pace with similar schools, but it is not as far ahead as in reading. In design and technology, physical education and music, standards for all pupils are better than typically seen. In all other subjects, inspection findings show that they are average for their age.

The school builds well on the skills that pupils already have on entry. Even given the differing length of time that they spend in the 'Early Years' and reception class, by the end of the Foundation Stage (end of reception), most children are meeting, and higher attainers are exceeding, the goals expected for their age in all areas of learning.

The school sets itself realistic targets and works hard to ensure that all pupils achieve as much as they can and make the most of their time at school. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are especially able benefit from this good attention and achieve well in relation to their capabilities.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school and eagerly involve themselves in all activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good at all times.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils have an unusually mature understanding of each other's needs and develop excellent relationships.

Attendance	This is well above the national average; pupils are punctual for school.
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Pupils' willingness to learn and the way in which they get on so well with adults and each other is the key strength, which makes this a successful school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	The Foundation Stage	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

All pupils are confident and enthusiastic learners because teachers have a good rapport with them and encourage them to 'have a go.' They are always ready to contribute answers and make suggestions because teachers are good at questioning them and drawing out responses. This quickens the pace of learning in investigative work because pupils learn to question and think for themselves. In subjects where there is particular expertise, children's learning is very good. Progress in subjects such as music, design and technology and physical education is particularly good. Teachers make lessons lively and stimulate an eager response by using interesting resources and activities.

Literacy and numeracy are taught well; lessons are well organised. Pupils learn new vocabulary and correct terms at good pace because teachers promote these aspects well. In a small number of lessons, the pace of learning is slower because teachers are not clear enough about what it is that children should be learning and therefore levels of challenge are occasionally too low for the higher attainers. Sometimes, expectations of the standards of presentation of work need to be higher and under achievement noted more rigorously by marking.

Pupils with special needs benefit greatly from the good understanding that all staff have of their needs; they maintain a high level of confidence and progress really well towards the targets clearly set out for them.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school's curriculum offers all pupils the chance to achieve well. Its quality is enriched by opportunities for pupils to visit other places and to learn from visitors to school. There is a good range of after school activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils' needs are quickly identified and they receive very good support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Provision for moral and social development is excellent. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to school life and learn how to live in harmony with others.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. There are very secure procedures in place for safeguarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils.

The school has a strong partnership with its parents and actively involves them in their children's education. The impact of this is most marked in the homework which results in strong development of their reading skills and their investigative work in mathematics. A very careful eye is kept on pupils' progress. The curriculum is practical and varied and meets the needs of children of this age well. The school's promotion of racial equality is good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the	Good leadership and management by the headteacher and subject leaders is maintaining the school's good performance and promoting a

headteacher and other key staff	strong ethos of care.
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How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. They take an active interest in the school and are involved in day-to-day activities and in planning the longer-term direction it will take.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Good analysis of data from test results. Monitoring procedures, however, are in the early stages of development and need to focus more sharply on teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Adults are deployed to best effect and the school's resources are carefully managed. The outdoor environment has been developed and managed particularly well.

The school mostly has sufficient resources, and it is good at increasing these through successful bids for grants and fund raising. The principles of best value are applied well; the school takes note of the views of its parents and pupils and keeps a careful eye on its performance in relation to other schools. There is scope for a further improving the effectiveness of its own systems for self-evaluation.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school; they behave well and the school helps them to become increasingly sensible and mature; • The staff are approachable; • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of out of school clubs and activities. Whilst parents acknowledged that this is an improving picture, some would like to see more.

Parents have justifiably high levels of confidence in the school; the inspection findings agree with their positive views. In relation to the concerns of a few parents: there is a good range of ways in which pupils may be involved in after school activities including opportunities for sport, music and gardening.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Looking back over the past three years, the school's results at the end of Key Stage 1 show an even trend of good performance. Occasionally there are noticeable dips, but school records show that these are sometimes related to test results for one or two pupils, or a greater proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the year group. As a case in point, in 2001, for example, the school's results were below those of similar schools and those nationally. Two pupils missed achieving the average level in tests by a few marks, and this was enough to skew the school's results downwards.
2. From fairly typical levels of attainment on entry, the school adds value to pupils' achievements in many areas of learning. Where the 4-year-olds show better than usual skills, for example, in communication and language, the school enables them to progress even further and they leave in Year 4 having achieved well above average standards. Some standards, such as those in handwriting and presentation of work could be higher, but in most subjects, standards of work are least in line with, or are exceeding those usually seen. In design and technology, music and physical education standards are better than usually seen.
3. The strong partnership that the school has with its parents is also reflected in its best areas of performance. In reading, for example, where standards are highest, parents work with their children at home and play an active role in supporting pupils' very good achievement. In mathematics similarly, parents give a great deal of support with problem solving and investigative mathematics and it is here that standards are highest in the subject.
4. Although the school's admission arrangements result in an uneven length of time for children in Foundation Stage, good assessment and careful planning by teachers means that they all achieve well and make the most of their time there. Some of the younger pupils, who spend a shorter time in this key stage are high attainers. The school pays good attention to ensuring that whilst they are happy and well settled, work is matched well to their needs and they are challenged.
5. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and in relation to their difficulties, most achieve a great deal during their time at school. They develop confidence and, because even their smallest progress is recognised, they will try all activities with their classmates.
6. Especially able pupils extend their gifts and talents well. The school's extra-curricular provision, in areas such as music and sport, gives them a chance to take their skills much further. Pupils' achievements outside school are recognised through records of achievement and in this way the staff are able to encourage and support their interests.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Pupils have very good attitudes towards learning and develop very positive values about life. They grow into exceptionally thoughtful young people who appreciate others' needs and can, therefore, develop unusually good relationships. They like being at school and are happy to explain this by saying that staff listen to them and are helpful, and other pupils are friendly. They are enthusiastic learners, settling well

at the beginning of lessons, showing interest in what their teachers prepare for them to do and keen to get involved and volunteer ideas. This interest means that they listen and concentrate well. For instance, pupils in Year 3 and 4 watched carefully while their teacher showed them how to prepare printing blocks so that when it came to their turn, they knew exactly what to do and used their time well, with successful results. There is a good take up for extra-curricular activities, such as the gardening club and sports events. Pupils proudly volunteer to be members of the Eco Squad or carry out their classroom jobs.

8. Standards of behaviour are very good and there has been no need to exclude any pupil in recent years. The school operates as a calm and orderly community in which everyone is aware of their role and responsibilities. In the playground, pupils mingle happily and are, on the whole, good about not invading others' space. They use the equipment, such as skipping ropes, space hoppers and balance rockers appropriately and treat them with respect, tidying them away onto the trolley when they have finished with them. Others choose to make use of the quiet area, which they helped to create, for a chat or an undisturbed read. In lessons this good behaviour continues, even where the teaching is less inspiring or where the activity is particularly exciting, for instance, when devising a science experiment or developing a clapping rhythm in music. Pupils move around the building quietly and, generally, courteous about holding doors open for adults or other children, and behave very well in assemblies.
9. Pupils respond very well to teachers' encouragement of them to think about others' needs and their own actions, with the result that they show an unusually mature outlook on life and develop excellent relationships. Older pupils making bookmarks, in a session with adults with learning disabilities, turned without hesitation to the adults for advice and guidance. A Year 1 pupil, considering good and less good features of the playground, volunteered that she liked the view, 'because lots of schools don't have a view like ours.' Another said that she felt sad when she saw the slope, 'because it reminds me of playing with my friend who is very ill.' Pupils collaborate very well in lessons, negotiating maturely when, for instance, devising their own rules for a ball game and then abiding by the rules, demonstrating a very good understanding of fair play. They appreciate others' skills, for example, spontaneously applauding the drumming of a visitor from Ceylon, and are happy to include pupils of different gender or ability in their activities.
10. Levels of attendance are very good and consistently well above the national average. Unless taking a term time holiday or genuinely unwell, pupils attend regularly and punctually, eager to enjoy the activities available to them and, often, having carried out research or other work at home, which enhances their learning at school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

11. The good quality of teaching seen during the inspection reflects the progress made by pupils over time. Nearly three quarters of the lessons seen were of good or better quality, with the vast majority of the remainder being satisfactory. From this pleasing base, the school's main future challenge lies in edging up the quality from sound to good and from good to very good. A sharper focus on the quality of learning during classroom observations, as part of the school's own monitoring procedures, is now needed to pinpoint areas of weakness in teaching, which if addressed could enable this upward shift.
12. Teachers take an affirmative approach with pupils and find ways of highlighting what is positive about their work and behaviour. This encourages pupils to extend themselves. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, for example, the class were learning to put familiar verbs into the past tense. As she looked at the work of one pupil, the teacher

noticed that he had tried to use a complex word, but had spelled it incorrectly. 'I really like that...it's a good word', she told him. He was pleased with his efforts and happy when the teacher then guided him towards the correct spelling.

13. Questioning skills are used to good effect in taking pupils' learning further or in assessing what they have learned. Science is taught well throughout the school; it offers many good examples of how teachers' questioning drives the rate of learning on quickly. A typical lesson in Year 1 saw the teacher moving between groups of pupils who were testing the speed of cars moving down a slope. Pupils were constantly challenged by her questions: 'What makes your car go faster down the slope?' 'Why does your car go further than your partner's?' 'Why do you think that happened?' These prompts moved pupils on in their thinking and encouraged them to look for solutions; they responded by discussing the height of the slope and how this affected the distance travelled.
14. Skilled teaching of literacy enables pupils to learn at a good rate and to use their skills confidently in other areas of learning. Vocabulary is developed particularly well and teachers make good connections between reading and writing. New words are often recorded on the board as lessons proceed and in this way, pupils see the connection between reading and writing. Even the youngest pupils are always encouraged to answer in full sentences and given time to explain themselves.
15. Some parts of numeracy lessons are taught better than others. Strategies for calculating and investigative work are taught well, whereas some oral lesson starters, when the teacher develops pupils' mental arithmetic skills, are not always as effective and need to be better paced. Higher attainers are not always sufficiently challenged by the problems set.
16. Interesting or stimulating activities and resources enliven many lessons. Pupils in Year 4, for example, sampled a wide range of bread for taste, appearance and texture as part of their design and technology work on making pizzas. The teacher had prepared a good range of resources in advance, which led to high levels of pupil interest and enthusiasm.
17. Where teaching is less inspired, the pace of learning in some lessons drops. The most noticeable reason for this is that teachers are not clear enough about what it is that children should be learning and, therefore, levels of challenge are occasionally too low for the higher attainers. An example of this arose in a science lesson with Year 3 pupils when their written responses to a task were unnecessarily limited because the teacher did not provide enough guidance. She was not as clear about the important learning points as she needed to be and did not therefore prompt pupils well enough in these areas.
18. Marking is an area where teaching could be even more effective. Sometimes, expectations of the standards of presentation of work need to be higher and noted more rigorously by marking.
19. Pupils with special needs are able to sustain a good pace or work because of the very good support they receive. Teachers and support assistants work as a close team in lessons. Everyone is clear about the learning targets for the pupils and all adults are therefore effectively deployed with individuals or groups. This helps pupils to cope well with work being undertaken by the class and to help them maintain concentration.

20. In some subjects, the teacher's strong knowledge and expertise benefits pupils who are especially able. In music, for example, higher attainers are stretched because they are challenged by the activities used; teachers are confident enough to set more adventurous tasks and push higher attainers harder to achieve them.

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

The curriculum

21. The school meets the statutory requirements and teaches all subjects of the national curriculum. The overall range and quality of the curriculum is good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Planning is good and the school's approach ensures that the curriculum helps pupils to make links in their learning and that it is relevant and engaging to all pupils.
22. Teachers have good guidance from subject leaders on what is to be taught each half term and how this may be done. The school has adapted the nationally recommended schemes of work to meet the needs of the pupils. Guidance for teachers includes indications about activities for different levels of attainment. Many activities have been designed that are open-ended in nature. There is need, however, for greater clarity about what could be expected from more advanced pupils so that there is an extra level of challenge.
23. The school's strategies used for teaching literacy and numeracy are good. Government initiatives to help boost the achievement of pupils who lag behind are well implemented. Opportunities are also planned to develop literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. In science, for example, pupils are given good opportunities to write non-fiction reports and observations, to use charts and tables, and to label diagrams. Speaking and listening is promoted well across the curriculum and pupils are given good opportunities to work collaboratively in many subjects. For example, in investigative work in mathematics and science or small sided games in physical education.
24. Pupils with special needs benefit from the school's effective provision. Their individual education plans have small achievable targets. These are reviewed at least termly and more often if progress is good or if progress is not being made. Targets are drawn up by class teachers in collaboration with the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO), parents and, if appropriate, the pupil.
25. A good feature of the curriculum is the planned inclusion of visits to, for example, Cannock Museum of World War Two. Visitors and special events in school are used well to enrich the curriculum, for example, India Day, Art Week and Greek Day.

Extra-curricular activities

26. A wide range of activities is run outside lesson time. These give the pupils a range of experiences and activities that help produce very good attitudes to school and raise standards. There is a good music provision with classes for recorder, cello, and violin. Pupils have good sporting opportunities with soccer clubs and coaching provided by a local professional football club, and tennis coaching. The school has a strong environmental commitment and has achieved 'Eco School' status. There is also a Gardening Club that is steadily transforming the school's garden.

Spiritual, moral, social, cultural provision

27. The overall provision to promote pupils' personal development is very good, with that for their social and moral development being outstanding. This is a significant improvement on the time of the previous inspection. A member of staff who has been at the school for many years volunteered that, while in her opinion pupils' attitudes had always been good, over recent years they have got 'better and better' as staff have placed ever more emphasis on the need to care for each other and show good manners. This aspect of school life is central to its work and is highly effective, as parents noted, in helping pupils to grow in maturity.
28. The school promotes pupils' spiritual development very well. If there has been a falling out in the playground, teachers take time to discuss the problem with those involved and help them to acknowledge how they could have handled the situation better and to come to reconciliation. They regularly encourage pupils to appreciate their surroundings inspiring, for instance, a Year 2 pupil to write, 'I like the trees and the bugs in the country. I like the world. It has a byootiful smel.' Staff show respect for pupils as individuals, encourage them to voice their ideas and to value others' differences as well as their similarities with the result that pupils grow in their understanding of others' needs and appreciate their skills. In a violin lesson, pupils were invited to 'think about the shape of the music' and 'listen to its mood', while in history others were asked to consider what a Viking or a medieval monk might have thought. In assemblies and circle time (when pupils come together to discuss their thoughts and feelings), pupils have the opportunity to reflect on life and develop their own values and beliefs. In personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lessons, pupils in Years 3 and 4 discussed the universal declaration of human rights and then related this to their own lives, deepening their understanding of the concept of what is fair and unfair.
29. Pupils' social and moral development is exceptionally well promoted. This results in the creation of a supportive, family atmosphere where, as stated in the school's aims, individuals 'develop self-respect, self-esteem and self-discipline, enabling them to cope with change.' In assemblies, staff give very strong moral messages about, for example, the importance of keeping promises, looking for the positive qualities in others, forgetting differences. At the beginning of each year, form groups decide on their own class rules which are always worded in a positive manner such as, 'Be honest. Co-operate. Be a friend. Remember good manners. Be sensible. Be a good listener. Smile.' Lunchtime arrangements have altered since the previous inspection so that now they are less formal, with pupils choosing what to eat and where to sit. Pupils and adults with special needs are fully included in school life, which helps the pupils to grow naturally in their acceptance of others. The effectiveness of this strong provision is exemplified by a brief observation at the end of the day of one pupil spontaneously congratulating, with an encouraging pat on the back, a classmate, who is classified as on the autistic spectrum, for his good behaviour that day and also for the quality of his art work completed earlier in the afternoon.
30. Woodcroft's status as an 'Eco School' makes a major contribution to pupils' personal development, encouraging them to value the environment and make their contribution towards sustaining it. The Eco Squad, which comprises many volunteers as well as class representatives on the committee, collect waste paper, turn off unnecessary water and lights and dispose of litter carefully. In lessons, pupils are naturally thoughtful about the amount of materials that they use. They recycle unwanted clothes and spectacles for redistribution to children in Chernobyl or Gambia. At the Mini May Fair, pupils take charge of stalls and create games to raise funds for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils of all ages work together making scones, taking orders and waiting at tables on cream tea afternoons to raise funds for the school and local charities. There is a clear understanding that a healthy school is one

where everybody is valued and works together in a positive manner. The school's strong and well thought out programme for teaching PSHCE skills supports this aspect of pupils' development really well.

31. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. In religious education they are helped to grow in their understanding and appreciation of a variety of cultures, religions and beliefs, noting both the similarities and the differences. Through history and geography, they learn about the way of life in different times, such as the Saxon period or their grandparents' early life, and places, such as Chembakolli. In order to broaden pupils' own experience of life in multicultural Britain, the school has developed a link with another school in an urban setting with a large percentage of pupils of Asian ethnicity, through which pupils visit each other's schools and have written contact. Pupils visit museums and theatres, which helps them to grow in their understanding of their own culture, but have few opportunities to, for instance, study the work of known artists or really consider the work of well known composers. The school does participate in local festivals and undertakes occasional 'immersion' days or weeks based around one theme. During the inspection, pupils in Years 3 and 4 enjoyed an Indian day, having already studied the topic in previous lessons. They had very good opportunities to learn more about that country's people and traditions through meeting a visiting musician and speaker who had brought a wealth of artefacts, making rakhi bracelets and creating rangoli patterns using information and communication technology (ICT).

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The school has maintained the good quality of care for pupils that was evident at the time of the previous inspection and which is one of the features that parents praise most highly. Staff know pupils well as individuals and the school ensures that everyone who needs to, knows about any specific needs that they may have. Various parents were complimentary about the efforts that staff go to in order to help pupils settle easily when they arrive at school, and also about the good preparation before they move on to middle school. This year, the move from Year 2 to Year 3 will be even more carefully supported, with the pupils' new teacher teaching them for literacy and numeracy before the end of the summer and helping to set the autumn term's targets. Two afternoons a year are devoted to pupils' completion of their Records of Achievement either on their own or, more usually, with their parent. They decide on the content, such as examples of work or certificates that they have won and, over the years, build up a personal portfolio of their developing skills and interests which provides useful monitoring information for teachers as well as a treasure trove of memories for the pupil and their family.
33. There are secure procedures in place to ensure child protection and health and safety. Staff, including midday assistants, have received relevant training and the good relationships that typify the school mean that they are alert to any changes of mood. They know what to do should they have concerns and any confidential information is kept suitably secure. The school carries out regular risk assessments to ensure that everyone is working within a safe environment and, on a day-to-day basis, staff act in a safe manner. They supervise pupils well in the playground and provide good quality care and first aid to those who have accidents or feel unwell. The arrangements to promote good attendance are very good; teachers register pupils carefully, the school monitors absence regularly and involves the educational welfare officer if it is felt to be necessary. Staff keep in regular contact with those who are absent through illness. The procedures relating to behaviour are highly effective and almost invisible. Staff are so consistent in their expectations of good behaviour, so quick to nip any potential problems in the bud and so quick, also, to praise pupils for behaving well or showing thoughtfulness, that it appears to be almost effortless.

The weekly reward of privilege time, which has been in place since the time of the previous inspection, is still successful as an incentive to pupils to behave well.

34. The school uses its assessments of pupils when they start school and those undertaken afterwards, to identify any special educational needs. Reviews of pupil progress against their individual education plans are carried out as required; paperwork is up-to-date and gives clear information on progress, needs and support required and given.
35. This is a school, which knows its pupils well and treats them as individuals. Their progress is tracked effectively, and although the rigour of this varies between subjects, it is never less than satisfactory. Test results are carefully analysed to identify strengths and weaknesses in learning for classes and individuals; each child has learning targets in reading, writing and mathematics and progress against these is monitored. In subjects where the school has recently revised its curriculum, assessment procedures are not as tight because new systems are being aligned to what will be taught.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

36. The very strong partnership that the school has developed with parents is one of its major strengths. It is clear that staff and parents have the same values and are prepared to work hard in order to ensure that pupils gain the maximum benefit from the educational opportunities that are on offer. As at the time of the previous inspection, parents view the school in a very positive light and all those spoken with were delighted by how much their children enjoy attending and how well the school supports them as they grow in independence. They find that staff are very approachable and consider that they are kept well informed about school events and their children's progress. In the questionnaire, some parents expressed dissatisfaction with the range of activities available outside lessons but even some of them stated that the provision had recently improved.
37. The school provides a wealth of information for parents including lively half termly newsletters with good notice of important dates and an outline of what topic the different year groups will be studying in the coming weeks. Other letters are issued very regularly with up-to-date information, and pupils in the reception class receive a weekly letter with hints on how their parents can join in with their learning. The prospectus is colourful, welcoming and informative but the governors' annual report omits items of the statutorily required information. Parents have regular opportunities to discuss their children's work with teachers and pupils' progress reports now identify targets for them to work on, which was not the case at the previous inspection.
38. There is good liaison with parents regarding pupils with special needs. The school raises concerns at the earliest opportunity and has a high level of support from parents in helping pupils work towards their targets at home. Parents feel that the school is dedicated to giving pupils with special needs the best possible start in life.
39. Parents and carers are very pleased with the quality of education provided by the school. They ensure that their children attend regularly and that they arrive with appropriate equipment and sports kit. They help them with their reading and other homework, and provide resources such as photographs for time lines or junk material for modelling. Some parents provide regular, weekly help in school and there are always volunteers to help on a one-off basis. Parents are very generous in their support for sponsored events, whether this is for school funds or to benefit charity, and the Parent Teachers' Association is extremely vigorous. It has recently donated a substantial sum towards the purchase of the interactive whiteboard and another

considerable amount towards new physical education equipment. Parents and staff trust each other to exchange important information which may affect a child's education or attitude and pupils can see that home and school are working together for their benefit with the result that they feel secure and thus happy to learn.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

40. The school is well led. The headteacher sets an excellent example in promoting a strong ethos of care and respect between all members of the school community. This underpins much of the school's success in enabling such high standards in pupils' personal development, as it sets the tone for all relationships and interactions. A strong determination by the headteacher in leading the school to ensure that barriers to learning are broken down has resulted in good achievement for all pupils. In turn this has contributed to the school's good performance and standards being maintained.
41. Subject leadership is mostly good; teachers with responsibility are knowledgeable and provide strong, practical support for colleagues. Many aspects of the curriculum have been reviewed and updated, and since the last inspection they have seen at least a steady rate of improvement. In some subjects, such as ICT, this has been even better and pupils are achieving more as a result.
42. Governors play an active role in strategic planning and target setting. They know the school's strengths well and share the staff's view of what the school needs to do to improve even further. As individuals, members of the governing body are actively involved in school life, and make a strong contribution to the ethos of care. One governor, for example, works as a special needs assistant in the school and provides valuable support for pupils who find learning more difficult. Another governor uses his expertise to the full in supporting teachers with work in ICT.
43. Some aspects of management are very strong, whereas other aspects need sharpening up. The school is very thorough, for example, in analysing its performance in tests and at using this information to tackle areas of weakness in learning. Monitoring and evaluation however, are in the early stages of development and it is only recently that staff have started to monitor each other's work. These procedures are not always sharp enough to pinpoint what will move the school on from doing a good job to doing a very good job. In trying to keep a check on standards, teachers focus too much on the intentions outlined in planning or on some of the less important aspects of lessons, rather than on the progress made by pupils and the outcomes of their work. In some subjects, teachers with responsibility have managed this well and have been shrewd and very perceptive. In design and technology, for instance, the subject leader took photographs of completed work and asked older pupils to talk to her about it. In this way she was able to assess what the pupils had gained from the teaching and how she needed to modify and improve the scheme of work.
44. Performance management processes are well established and enable all staff in the school to direct their energy at the same goals, whilst updating their own knowledge and expertise. New staff are given a helpful induction, and the skills of all staff are harnessed to best advantage in delegating responsibilities.
45. The school's financial resources are managed well. The school's modest budget is boosted by the headteacher's skill in successfully bidding for grants. This in turn, improves provision. For example, a successful bid was made recently to refurbish the gymnastics equipment in the hall. The budget has been allocated judiciously and equipment, such as that for ICT has been updated and increased. Together with the headteacher, the governors set clear anticipated outcomes for their spending

decisions and check to see that money spent results in these criteria being met. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis because the administrative officer is extremely efficient and provides very good support for the headteacher and staff. Accommodation is used well, and a great deal of thought and care has gone into making the outdoor environment a stimulating place for pupils to enjoy. The indoor environment has too little storage space, which sometimes results in classrooms being rather cluttered.

46. The principles of best value are applied well. The headteacher and governors regularly discuss the school's performance and compare it to that of similar schools. The views of parents and pupils are sought and suggestions are acted upon. The success of the school is underpinned by the value that staff and governors place on the voice and opinions of pupils and parents.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

47. Woodcroft is already a successful and thriving school; to build further on this good base, the staff and governors should now form an action plan to address the following issues:

- (a) Improve standards of handwriting and presentation by:
- agreeing what are the acceptable standards for the neatness and presentation of pupils' work;
 - fully implementing the school's recently agreed handwriting policy;
 - paying particular attention to this aspect of pupils' work when marking.
(paragraphs: 2, 18, 75, 89, 95)
- (b) Sharpen the way that the school monitors and evaluates the quality of its work by:
- ensuring that monitoring and evaluation procedures are more strongly focused on pupils' achievement and learning outcomes;
 - providing further training for staff in this aspect.
(paragraphs 11, 43, 81, 89, 100, 108, 113)

Whilst they are not key issues, the staff and governors may consider the following minor points for inclusion in the action plan:

- as the budget allows, increase the quality of outdoor play provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage to include larger climbing apparatus;
(paragraphs 68, 69)
- build on the good start made in improving provision for ICT so that it is more strongly developed through other curriculum areas;
(paragraph 93, 114)
- improve the pace and challenge of mental/oral lesson starters in numeracy;
(paragraph 88)
- ensure that the school's prospectus complies with statutory requirements.
(paragraph 37)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	20	7	2	0	0	0
Percentage	15	59	21	6	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 three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	216
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	14

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	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	13	22	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	10	12
	Girls	22	22	22
	Total	34	32	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (93)	91 (87)	97 (89)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	12
	Girls	22	22	22
	Total	33	33	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (87)	94 (85)	97 (87)
	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	159	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	52	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.8
Average class size	25.4

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	143

FTE means full-time equivalent

Financial information

Financial year	2002-03
	£
Total income	423150
Total expenditure	415840
Expenditure per pupil	2147
Balance brought forward from previous year	11200
Balance carried forward to next year	7310

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	207
Number of questionnaires returned	66

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	79	18	2	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	53	41	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	65	35	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	56	36	5	0	3
The teaching is good.	76	21	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	47	5	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	88	11	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80	17	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	52	44	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	82	17	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	76	23	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	30	17	3	2

Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer and may not total 100.

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

48. The school admits children from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences but overall, they show average skills and knowledge for four year olds in all areas of learning. They have particularly well developed language and communication skills, and personal and social skills.
49. Irrespective of the number of terms they have spent in school, by the end of the Foundation Stage most children are achieving the expectations for their age in all areas of learning, and their personal and social skills are much better than typically seen. About a third of the children are also attaining much more than is expected of them in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world.
50. All children progress well in the Foundation Stage, because teaching is at least good and often better in each class and in all areas of learning. Pupils with special needs are particularly well supported and enabled to gain great confidence and enjoyment from their work. Teachers accommodate the different ages, and length of time that each child has been in school well, through careful planning and a good knowledge of children's progress. This enables them to successfully match work to children's needs.
51. Staff in the Foundation Stage have a very good partnership with parents and they are made welcome in all the classes. At the start and end of sessions the atmosphere is cheerful as parents and staff update each other about the children. The security of this relationship is one of the reasons why children settle so well in school and quickly show trust in adults.
52. The work of the Foundation Stage is very well led and managed by the teacher responsible. She is a knowledgeable practitioner who sets an excellent example for staff, through high quality teaching. Changes, for example, to the curriculum or in methods of assessment, are managed well. Her strong sense of purpose has been a key factor in influencing developments in the provision for the school's youngest children. Whilst she keeps a careful eye on the overall quality of provision, there is scope for development of monitoring and evaluation procedures. These need to focus more sharply on the quality of learning, if what is already a good rate of pupil progress is to be taken even further.

Personal, social and emotional development

53. In the 'Early Years' class, children relate confidently to adults, and go about choosing their own activities and selecting resources sensibly. The adults encourage them to take increasing responsibility for looking after themselves and deciding what they want to do. As a result, they increase their independence well and start to initiate their own ideas.
54. All staff place a high emphasis on helping children to relate well to others and make friends. Most play happily together, share equipment and take turns when, for instance, they use the wheeled vehicles during outdoor play. This strong start is built upon in the reception class, where children show good co-operative skills during lessons. During a mathematics lessons in the reception classes, for example, they wait patiently for each to finish using shapes so that they can make symmetrical patterns.

55. Children with special educational needs related to behavioural problems are managed sensitively, so that whilst they maintain their self-esteem, they are also made aware of the impact of their actions on other children.
56. A strong feature of all the classes is that adults listen carefully to what children have to say. The children learn through this good example and listen carefully to others.
57. In the 'Early Years' class, children begin to spend longer periods of time on activities and start to concentrate really well. This is because the adults have a sharp awareness of what it is that will hold their attention, challenge them and engage them sufficiently. During one language lesson a group of higher attainers concentrated for a long time on matching sounds and letters and eventually producing short sentences with the teacher. This was because the teacher chose the topic of holidays around which to base the work; the children enjoyed this and readily joined in with their own ideas.

Communication, language and literacy

58. When they arrive in school, most children already speak clearly and quite fluently. Most make good progress in the Foundation Stage classes because adults take every opportunity to engage them in conversation and prompt them to explain what they are thinking or doing. In the 'Early Years' class, children change their voice to pretend when they use the role play area. In the reception classes they use their language skills increasingly well to explain what they are doing.
59. In the 'Early Years' class, children are good at handling books and most recognise their own names. Most children get to know the initial sounds of some words and can match them to letters. Parents play a significant role in this early development as they work at home with the 'letter of the week'; they help their child to find pictures with objects, which start with the letter and paste them onto a sheet, which the teacher then displays in the classroom. By the time they leave the reception class, most are reading familiar words and sentences. They are used to handling books and when sharing books with adults, they enthusiastically join in with familiar parts or repeated lines in stories. They can remember the main events in a story and know the sequence in which they happen.
60. Some of the higher attaining children in the 'Early Years' class can write their own name, and the plentiful supply of pens, pencils and paper encourages them to extend these skills. In all the Foundation Stage classes, children see writing as purposeful because teachers ensure that writing tasks are an integral part of many activities. In the 'Early Years' class, for example, children make notes to take orders in the café role play area. Most children in the reception class are in line to exceed expectations for their age by the end of the year in writing words and sentences independently. Sometimes their achievements could be taken further as children complete worksheets when they are capable of writing responses themselves.

Mathematical development

61. Most children count well beyond ten by the end of their reception year and they know how to find one more or one less than numbers from one to ten. They get off to a very good start in the 'Early Years' class where adults are skilled at developing their knowledge of number by introducing simple counting games. Much of this is done through everyday activities that are part of the daily routine, such as counting how many children are present or absent by drawing their faces on the board during registration.

62. In the reception classes, progress is good; children extend their knowledge of shape and number well. Most of them confidently use mathematical language to count or to describe the shape and size of objects; they express what they mean in terms such as 'bigger', 'smaller', 'taller than.' The higher attainers are able to describe and name many 2 and 3 dimensional shapes and refer to the position of objects. Some go as far as count to twenty in two's and calculating simple addition and subtraction sums.
63. Teaching in this area of learning is good and lessons provide children with many opportunities to gain enjoyment through their work. Teachers make learning fun with many games and interesting activities.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

64. The Foundation Stage classes build well on the skills that children bring to school by developing their natural curiosity. Good use is made of the school's outdoor environment, where children observe at first-hand, the changes in living things as they grow. They are able to join the gardening club and soon begin to contribute to the school's work in looking after the environment.
65. Children's understanding and skills in using computers is better than typically seen in the Foundation Stage. In the reception classes, children confidently use the computer without adult support and can use the mouse to control the program. Through their play in the Foundation Stage classes, they learn that many everyday objects are controlled by technology and they enjoy working with computers to develop their other skills. In mathematics, for example, reception children made good progress in understanding shape while using computers to draw symmetrical shapes.
66. Reception children have a good awareness of the surrounding area and talk confidently about the local amenities near their homes. They reflect this knowledge in their play with construction apparatus and show that they understand the basic construction of buildings, by adding roofs and doors. At the end of the reception year, children handle a variety of tools and equipment safely and can use both small and large building blocks in construction work.

Physical development

67. When they start in the 'Early Years', most children have good co-ordination and show good control in their movements. They show better control over small movements than normally seen, and for instance, they manage clothes fastenings very well. They manipulate small objects easily, such as joining small building block pieces.
68. Whilst most children make good progress in developing some large-scale movement, in other aspects it is not as strong. The school's facilities enable them to run, jump and develop spatial awareness in the hall, but there are insufficient opportunities for them to climb, balance, swing and tackle much more adventurous outdoor activities each day.
69. The school is continually updating its outdoor provision for children in the Foundation Stage and additions are still being made. Although there are opportunities for children to use wheeled vehicles and slides, there is still not enough equipment to help them safely develop their physical skills to the full extent.

Creative development

70. Children exceed the expectations for their age in drawing and painting. Reception children draw figures of people and animals with recognisable features. Adults skilfully draw on the children's experiences and interests to stimulate their creativity.
71. Children's musical development is better than typically seen. All classes are often heard singing and children develop a good repertoire of favourite songs and rhymes, and have opportunities to compose their own music and experiment with sounds. Very good teaching means that they progress quickly in their understanding of rhythm and pitch and gain great enjoyment from lessons.
72. Children show good imagination in role play activities. Reception children suggest ideas and adapt their own play well to that of others, and enter enthusiastically into each other's imaginary worlds. Adults in the 'Early Years' class are good at joining in with role play and then withdrawing at an appropriate moment when the children seem ready to continue on their own.

ENGLISH

73. Standards in English are better than average throughout the school.
74. By the end of Key Stage 1, children read competently and confidently. They understand what they are reading and can predict what will happen next. They can explain why characters behave as they do and are able to articulate the feelings of the characters. Even the youngest pupils can explain why they like or do not like the story in their books and are able to recall other stories they have read or heard at school and at home. Parents make a strong contribution to the high reading standards, and this is seen in the home to school reading journal and parental comments. Reading results in tests are impressive and consistent because reading is given a high profile in school. In lessons, shared and guided reading is carried out well with pupils showing enthusiasm and enjoyment. The school is currently developing the library in order to satisfy pupils' love of books, both fiction and non-fiction.
75. Test results in writing also show good standards; whilst writing is not quite in line with reading, systems implemented by the school to raise standards in writing are working and there is a clear trend of improvement. New policies for handwriting and spelling have been adapted. Whilst these are in their infancy and some improvement can be seen, teachers still have insufficiently high expectations of pupils, especially with regard to presentation and a more rigorous consistency needs to be achieved. For example, standards of neatness could be improved by using an agreed framework for setting out the date and title on pieces of work. One class was observed using guidelines for their handwriting that were themselves wavy and not horizontal. Pupils in all classes are able to produce good, coherent written work and generally complete tasks well. Lessons are mostly matched well to pupils' needs and offer a range of interesting tasks. Those pupils with special needs are given tasks often matched directly to targets on their Individual Education Plan and they are given good, but not intrusive, help by their support assistants, enabling them to be fully included in lessons and make good progress.
76. Pupils write for a good range of audience and purpose and good literacy skills are evident in all subjects, particularly in science and numeracy, where pupils are given opportunities to write lists, notes, instructions and describe how they have solved problems.

77. Pupils attain high standards of speaking and listening. They start school with better listening skills than usual for this age, with wide vocabularies and a relatively mature use of language. The school builds well on these skills and by the time they leave, they have developed a very good understanding of verbs, nouns, adjective and adverbs, past, present and future tenses, phonemes, and compound words. They use this knowledge of grammar to good effect in speaking and writing. In lessons, they show high levels of concentration and very good skills of listening to the views of others and in contributing their own ideas and opinions. Pupils ask and answer questions with confidence and are able to discuss issues sensibly and sensitively. This is especially evident in PSHCE lessons in Key Stage 2 where the thoughtfulness of pupils' contributions added greatly to the quality of debate.
78. Where it is being used well, target setting is having a strong impact on pupils' progress. The school has its own literacy targets: each pupil has a target set by their own teacher and one which is set by the pupil and teacher together. Parents also share in the target setting process and this results in well focused homework, which is helping to raise standards.
79. Inconsistency is evident in the quality of marking of pupils' work. At best, it contributes well to pupils' understanding of how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. Purposeful and easily understood comments show children why their work is good and what they need to do to make it better. This is an uneven picture however, and whilst most marking in the school is affirmative, it is not always informative enough.
80. Teaching of English is good, with well planned lessons and interesting activities, which enable pupils to make good progress. In the very few lessons where there is a little less progress, the teacher is not clear enough about what they want pupils to learn. This means that the focus of the lesson is too vague for the teacher and pupils and the rate of learning slows.
81. English is effectively managed by the co-ordinator, who has a clear picture of the subject now and a future plan for further improvement. A careful eye is kept on the school's performance; data is analysed well and used to inform literacy target setting for whole years groups and individuals. The school's tracking systems, allow teachers to monitor the progress of pupils through the use of assessment results; these give the school good information on trends of pupils' performance. The co-ordinator has monitored lessons to judge the effectiveness of the new initiatives and changes; current monitoring arrangements are regularly implemented, but need to be even more sharply focused on the quality of pupils' learning.

MATHEMATICS

82. Standards in mathematics are in line with the national average at the end of Year 2. By the time they leave at the end of Year 4, pupils are reaching the standards typical for their age. A significant number of the oldest pupils are beginning to work at a higher level in aspects of shape and measure and number. All areas of mathematics as outlined in the national guidelines are given sufficient emphasis. A particular strength is the focus on investigative work in both key stages. This is largely dealt with through open-ended homework tasks and allows parents to become more involved in their children's learning.
83. The school consistently meets the targets it sets. Overall, the trend in standards has risen since the previous inspection. Girls and boys perform equally well in mathematics. Pupils whose skills require a boost, because of additional or specific needs are very well supported.

84. Given their attainment when they first start school, pupils in Year 2 make steady progress and achieve as well as expected. The achievement of pupils in Year 4 is good given their capability and the levels they attained in previous national tests. However, progress is more striking in some lessons due to the pace of teaching and level of challenge planned for the pupils. Numeracy skills are sound. Pupils use both mental and written methods to solve number problems. Pupils in Year 2 for example, add and subtract mentally numbers to 20 and are confident when counting and ordering numbers to 100. They are beginning to use standard units of measure such as centimetres and to develop a sound understanding of two and three-dimensional shapes. By the end of Year 4 pupils calculate accurately with numbers to 1000 and to begin to explore the concept of negative numbers. They recognise number patterns and sequences and know some of the multiplication tables. Higher attaining pupils show an increasing understanding of decimal notation and know for example that a half is equal to 50 per cent.
85. There is room for improvement in the way that teachers plan to help pupils develop their mathematical skills in other subjects. During the inspection, limited use was made of the computers in classrooms to support learning, though one good example was seen when Year 1 pupils used them to develop their knowledge of symmetry. Although some data handling was seen in ICT and science, opportunities in other subjects are not set out in plans.
86. Teaching quality in mathematics is good overall, although there are one or two weaknesses which, if addressed, could raise this quality even further. Pupils' progress and their good achievements are underpinned by the quality of relationships leading at times to exemplary behaviour in lessons. Teachers listen to and value the contributions which pupils make. As a result, pupils approach work confidently and show good levels of perseverance. All teachers encourage pupils to work collaboratively and to share ideas. Pupils respond very well, often helping and supporting one another and showing very good initiative in managing their own work.
87. Resources are used effectively to add more interest to lessons and to help pupils learn. Practical activities are planned thoughtfully to ensure that all groups are engaged in learning at their own level. In a lesson for pupils in Year 2, the teacher constructed a large grid from coloured foam tiles to represent a 'treasure island' so pupils could more easily see the squares located by simple co-ordinates. Number games to help pupils consolidate their understanding of sequences and patterns are also a strong feature of some lessons.
88. The strongest teaching was seen in those lessons where the objectives for learning were made clear to the pupils so they knew what was expected of them. In one lesson, for example, after the teacher had clarified what the lesson was about, there was a brisk well focused mental activity which resulted in some reception and Year 1 pupils being better at adding 10 or 1 to any number up to 100. This swiftly led on to a practical measuring task, which was clearly explained so that both groups could set about the independent work confidently. The reception group organised their own workspace and settled quietly while the teacher explained the work to Year 1 pupils. The challenging pace was kept up throughout the lesson and no time was lost through having to go over explanations. This enabled the teacher to use her time much more efficiently in monitoring and giving support where it was most needed. However, this rate of learning is not always evident, particularly during oral and mental work. The pace of these sessions is sometimes too ponderous, because the teachers have not clearly thought out what pupils will learn, or what skills they will improve. Activities sometimes lack variety and interest. In one lesson the issue of 'who has not had a turn' became more important than testing pupils' mental agility through sharp and rigorous questioning. In practical work, recording skills are sometimes not helped by the over use of work sheets.

89. The subject leader makes a good contribution to the leadership and management of mathematics. Regular monitoring of lesson content and pupils' progress has enabled her to gain a sound overview of the school's work and to assist with termly reviews of class targets. Her good subject knowledge and expertise ensures that strong support is made available to colleagues. The co-ordinator's monitoring skills is an area for further development in order to pinpoint areas where teaching could be more effective. For example, in some classes, the teacher's expectation of how pupils should present their work is too low. They are not being challenged rigorously enough through marking to improve their standards of presentation or encouraged to see how their work has improved over time.

SCIENCE

90. Assessments made by teachers at the end of Key Stage 1 show that pupils achieve higher than average standards. Inspection findings confirm this and show that pupils make good progress throughout the school. So that by the time they leave at the end of Year 4 they are achieving higher than typical standards. This is a better picture than at the time of the last inspection, which has been brought about by improvements in curriculum planning, effective use of investigative work and good teaching.
91. A good quality curriculum helps pupils make links in their learning. It also ensures that they cover a good spread of work over the two key stages so that a good understanding of important scientific facts is built up, and achievement in investigative work is strong.
92. By Year 2, pupils have a good knowledge of materials and their properties. They can begin, for instance, to describe how materials are suited to specific purposes such as keeping warm. In Year 1, pupils can describe the changes made when objects or materials are pushed or pulled, for example with plasticene or toy cars. A Year 1 pupil described the path of the pushed toy car as being 'in the shape of a rainbow.' Teachers provide a good range of investigative work that motivates and stimulates pupils, as well as developing their understanding and skills. Pupils respond very well when carrying out their investigations, using resources well and collaborating very effectively. For example, in a Year 1 lesson when pupils were working with toy cars, wooden blocks and sections of plastic guttering, they made predictions and described similarities and differences about the way the cars moved when force was applied.
93. Pupils in Year 4 also have a good knowledge and understanding of scientific facts. They know about solids and liquids and understand that some materials will dissolve. They can compare different pitches of sound and know that sound travels. Good quality teaching introduces this knowledge thoroughly and brings science to life through investigations. As in Key Stage 1, pupils work very well together and support each other's learning. They are provided with a range of different ways of recording their investigations and observations. These include charts, tables, diagrams, labels and written observations. There are many, well planned opportunities to develop good literacy skills by compiling lists, drawing conclusions, labelling and writing non-fiction observations or descriptions, for example, describing what a balloon felt like. Some opportunities for numeracy are developing, for instance, with children drawing the graph to record the length of string and the pitch of note. However, more use could be made of ICT to record work as graphs or tables. Good use of investigative work is developing pupils' independent learning as is the expectation they record their own findings and draw conclusions.
94. Teaching in both key stages is good. Teachers organise lessons well and use support assistants effectively. Open questions are used well and this encourages all

pupils to participate fully in discussions. Teachers take care to see that less able pupils and those with special educational needs take a full part in lessons. Investigations are well planned and resourced to ensure that all pupils can complete them successfully. Assessment procedures are now established but need to be consistently used to match tasks to pupils' levels of understanding more accurately.

95. Pupils' achievement could be raised even further if the organisation and presentation of their work was better and if marking picked up lapses in quality. Where marking is good, there are comments and questions posed to pupils that help to deepen their understanding or challenge their conclusions. For example, in a Year 4 pupil's book the teacher had written 'Why do you think we can't see the salt or sugar now?' When it is less effective there are just ticks or 'good work' and 'well done,' comments.
96. The subject co-ordinator has provided good leadership and guidance to bring about the improvements since the last inspection. Teachers are now clear about what to teach and how to go about it. The subject leader has had the opportunity to monitor how well the subject is developing and now needs to use these evaluations to plan further improvements.

ART AND DESIGN

97. Standards in art are average and pupils enjoy their work. Activities for pupils are often linked to current topics in other subjects, which makes them purposeful and enjoyable, but limits a strong, systematic development of a range of skills: for example, in developing a clear method of evaluating their own work. Similarly, pupils show a good ability in two-dimensional drawing, which is in abundance in displays and sketchbooks, but have too little opportunity to broaden out their style and use of a greater range of media.
98. Teaching quality is sound overall. In one good lesson in a Year 3/4 class pupils were preparing to print their own Indian patterns on fabric. Good input by the teacher encouraged the class to think for themselves and to experiment with pattern and shape. Wider practice of this teaching style in art is required to increase achievement. Other teaching however, does not fully exploit pupils' outstanding collaborative skills and their well developed sense of appreciation of the work of others, which form an excellent basis for more adventurous and lively work. Pupils enjoy art and take a pride in tasks offered to them. They work carefully and tidily, respecting the resources.
99. Children have studied other artists and their styles, and have attempted to paint like them. The school helps children to draw inspiration from the work of older pupils from the local high school, which is displayed to great effect along corridors. Some of the other displays are bright and attractive, but some create less valuable visual impact. Very large drawing pins also spoil the effect of displays and detract from their quality.
100. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Monitoring of standards is informal; whilst some issues are noted by the co-ordinator, the process is not rigorous enough to pinpoint areas of underachievement. The co-ordinator has recognised the need to broaden the range of pupils' experiences and has adapted and introduced a new art scheme; elements of this are now filtering their way into lessons. The rate of development in the subject is therefore picking up pace, but it is not yet having a marked impact on standards or pupils' achievement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

101. Standards in design and technology at the end of Years 2 and Year 4 are above average. Good leadership and management, which include effective systems for assessment and monitoring, have contributed to the improved picture since the last

inspection. The co-ordinator has modified national subject guidance to plan a relevant scheme of work, which deals well with the development of skills. Liaison with the local middle school ensures that this is approached systematically and that unnecessary repetition is avoided. Shortcomings in the school's approach to teaching design, which were identified previously have been dealt with successfully. This element of learning is now a strength of the subject.

102. Pupils in the infant classes work with a wide range of materials including food, fabrics, paper and card. They learn how to join materials by sticking fabrics or selecting the most appropriate adhesives. Projects are linked purposefully to other curriculum areas. For example when studying 'Houses and Homes' pupils evaluated and selected the fabrics they would like in their own bedrooms. This effectively linked their learning in geography with designing skills. Technology and science are linked in food topics when pupils design a 'healthy' picnic or make a fruit salad.
103. Junior pupils build well on skills learned in Key Stage 1. Their designs are more sophisticated, include details of materials and processes, and are often modified as they progress to overcome problems. Products are carefully evaluated, when finished to decide how they might be improved. Pupils work with flexible and rigid materials and learn to use the appropriate tools for cutting, shaping and joining. Teachers use opportunities well to provide wider experiences in designing and making. As part of 'Indian Day' for example, pupils in Year 4 learned the skills of making rakhi bracelets by plaiting coloured ribbons. Pupils also designed litterbins for the playground as part of their Eco project.
104. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are planned and organised well, with enough resources to ensure that all pupils are fully engaged in the work. Teachers make tasks purposeful and interesting by discussing with pupils the long-term aims of what they are doing. For example, pupils in Year 1 thought more carefully about how to build vehicle chassis, axles and wheels because they knew that their models had to be strong enough to carry something. The pace of learning in lessons is good with time used effectively on relevant tasks. Year 4 pupils tasted and completed evaluations of several types of bread and still had time to share ideas and comment at the end of the lesson, because time was managed so well. Teachers' explanations are clear and expectations of what pupils can achieve are high resulting in good levels of interest and motivation.

GEOGRAPHY

105. Standards in geography are in line with expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. This is similar to standards seen in the previous inspection. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school in both their knowledge and geographical enquiry skills.
106. The curriculum is planned thoughtfully using national subject guidance, as well as some topics generated by the school, to ensure pupils' learning is relevant and based as far as possible on first-hand experiences. One such topic involves links with an urban school whereby Woodcroft pupils can look for similarities and differences between the two environments. The curriculum is also enriched through fieldwork in the locality and visitors to the school. During the inspection a visitor from Sri Lanka helped pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn a great deal about life in India, by showing them Indian dress, musical instruments, religious artefacts and by answering many questions. Pupils also gained some experience of Indian music and dance.
107. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In a lesson for pupils in Year 2, the teacher took advantage of the panoramic view of the surrounding countryside, comparing that with photos of areas around an urban school. Geographical language was

consolidated well as pupils identified the features of the landscape they saw. Pupils improved their observational skills and identified how and why places were different. Throughout the school outcomes in pupils' books show that they are encouraged to use their literacy skills when recording work. Some good examples were seen in Year 4 when pupils compared a typical day of their own with that of a girl from a village in India. Key Stage 1 pupils use the stories about 'Katie Morag' and her life on an island to learn about the differences between places. Although sufficient work is covered, it is not always well presented because sometimes teachers do not expect enough from pupils. For example, work is not always finished off and pictures and diagrams are sometimes carelessly drawn.

108. The co-ordinator makes a sound contribution to the leadership and management of the subject. A successful 'spin off' is that Woodcroft is now recognised as 'Eco School' because of the efforts made to improve the environment and raise pupils' awareness of the importance of saving energy and water. The process of monitoring pupils' books and lessons is well established, but evaluations often lack a sharp focus and do not identify the impact that teaching has on pupils' learning. Practices are therefore not always challenged with the view to bringing about improvement and further raising standards.

HISTORY

109. Standards of work are in line with those seen in most schools by the time pupils are aged 7 years and when they leave the school at the end of Year 4. This is the same as it was at the time of the previous inspection.
110. By the age of 7 years, pupils have developed a sound understanding of the difference between past and present through their study of old and new toys. They have used both primary sources, such as looking at old toys and talking to older people about them, and secondary sources, such as photographs and books, to develop their skills of enquiry and extend their knowledge. By they leave the school, pupils have a sound knowledge of the invasions by the Vikings. They are able to use a variety of secondary sources, for example, books, video, a CD-ROM and the Internet, to develop their enquiry skills. Pupils undertake a good range of activities that also develop their literacy skills, for example, note taking, labelling and vocabulary. They were also encouraged as part of one topic to consider the invasions of the Vikings in terms of the modern context of racism and bullying. This theme was also enhanced by the visit of the 'Longship Trading Company', which gave the pupils further insights and experience of Viking life.
111. The work in pupils' books reflected the wide range of activities that the lessons had covered. However, the presentation of some work could be improved and higher standards could be expected for illustrations.
112. History is taught through topics that are designed to engage the pupils and link well with other areas of the curriculum. The planning shows attention to the development of skills and knowledge and keeps the identity of the subject, which is an improvement from the last inspection. Planning for history has been adapted from national guidance and includes consideration for different levels of attainment in the planning of tasks. There was a good example of support for a pupil with special educational needs who had a classroom assistant to write down his observations of Viking clothing.
113. Leadership of the subject is sound. The medium-term planning, drawn up by the subject leader using the national guidance, ensures the subject is covered well. The curriculum is enhanced by visits, visitors and the use of artefacts and first hand experiences. The work of the subject leader has been focused on developing the

curriculum. Now there is the need to check on how well pupils are doing across the school and to identify what needs to be done to bring about improvements.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

114. Standards are average at both key stages. The school has put a great deal of investment into purchasing new equipment and staff training since the last inspection; pupils now have a sufficient range of experience of the different uses of technology. Teachers are now getting to grips with combining these experiences with work in other subjects. Year 1 pupils, for example, used a photocopier and tape recorder to order the sequence of actions needed as they set out instructions for making gingerbread men. In general, more limited use is made of the computers in classrooms to support learning.
115. Pupils achieve steadily across all aspects and show an increasing confidence in working on computers. This has been boosted by the school's recent increase in equipment, but it is still not sufficient to give pupils enough 'hands-on' experience when they are learning new skills as a whole class. Although they reach average standards, many pupils could achieve more, given the experiences that they bring from home and the speed with which they pick up new skills.
116. Steady progress can be seen in pupils' work. In using computers to store information, for example, Year 1 pupils make picture graphs showing favourite pets and most common eye or hair colour. In Year 3, these skills are being taken much further, and pupils are starting to organise information more systematically and work with records and fields. In Key Stage 1, pupils steadily develop skills of exchanging and sharing information by writing sentences and adding pictures on the computer. An example from Key Stage 2, showing how pupils progress from this is seen in Years 3 and 4 where pupils confidently search for and download pictures to illustrate their work on the Ancient Greeks.
117. Whilst the quality of teaching is good overall, the pace of pupils' learning drops off slightly in some lessons because the work is not matched well enough to their needs. This is because the school has adapted a national scheme of work and there are still one or two parts that need fine-tuning. In keeping with the good pace of development and willingness of the staff to get it right, they are evaluating the effectiveness of their lessons and amending the scheme as they try it out.
118. The subject is being led enthusiastically and energetically and the teacher responsible encourages and supports colleagues well. This has not been an area where the staff have felt confident, but with good leadership, they have developed their own skills well; as a consequence the quality of teaching is quickly improving and pupils are starting to achieve more.

MUSIC

119. Standards in music throughout the school are better than typically seen. Pupils make good progress in all aspects of music and gain particular strengths in composing and performing. The curriculum is planned well and the subject knowledge and expertise of the headteacher and co-ordinator, who teach music throughout the school, ensure challenge and high expectations in lessons.
120. There are good opportunities outside of lesson time for pupils to develop their interest. In a thriving recorder club pupils learn to read music and experience playing as part of a group. Violin tuition is also available. Those pupils who take up this option make very good progress because of highly effective teaching by the visiting tutor. One group performed some impressive short pieces which they composed

themselves at home. Pupils are encouraged to listen to music before and after assemblies and identify different instruments. They sing tunefully, following an accompaniment well and have a good repertoire of songs and hymns.

121. The quality of teaching is very good and it generates high levels of motivation and enthusiasm during lessons. Teachers carefully choose activities that will appeal to children and this results in great enjoyment and a very good pace of learning in lessons. A typical example of this was seen in a lesson with Year 1 and reception age children, where the teacher had chosen the familiar story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' for the class to work with. The children threw themselves into performing the giant's part with actions and chants; they energetically stamped and clapped, 'Fee, Fi, Fo, Fum!' in unison and altered the pitch of their voices to suit the action. Pupils in this lesson made very good progress in developing their skills to accompany others and in their understanding and use of rhythm and pitch.
122. Subject leadership and management are strong. The co-ordinator brought about improvements since the last inspection and maintains the high profile of music in the school. She has a very clear overview of the school's work in the subject and effectively brings about changes to improve standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

123. In line with the picture seen at the time of the last inspection, pupils are achieving standards in physical education that are better than in most schools. This is because the school has a successful physical education programme that is well led by the enthusiastic subject co-ordinator; there is a good programme of activities offered and lessons are of good quality.
124. During their time at the school pupils have the opportunity to take part in a well planned programme of gymnastics, dance, outdoor games, swimming, athletics and dance. A varied out of school programme provides further good activities, for example, a scheme run by a local professional club offers coaching for all pupils. The school is keen to participate in sports events with other local schools, for example, in soccer and cricket, and these opportunities are offered to as many pupils as possible.
125. Pupils' work seen in lessons in Key Stage 2, shows that pupils have achieved well during their time in school. For example, in a Year 4 lesson on the playground, they demonstrated much more accurate passing and catching ability than usually seen. Pupils also collaborate very well to create their own aiming, throwing and catching games. They are all keen participants in lessons, and co-operate and work together very well. The swimming programme is also successful with most pupils being able to swim by the time they leave the school.
126. The quality of games lessons is good. Pupils are immediately involved because teachers start with brisk warm-up activities; this is followed by skills practice and then collaborative or small sided games. Teachers organise the children well and use the good range of resources effectively. This means that pupils have good opportunities to improve their skills in a variety of activities that are fun and enjoyable. When pupils work in small groups, they support and coach each other patiently.
127. The school has a strong commitment to maintaining the good record of pupil achievement. Through the Parents' Association, school budget and sponsorship, funding has been gathered to refurbish the fixed and large apparatus in the school hall. This is being changed to make the equipment more suitable to the pupils' needs. Staff are keen to ensure that all pupils can participate successfully in physical education and a variety of resources and equipment has been purchased to make

the most of every opportunity. Tennis racquets, for example, have been bought and nets have been borrowed, to support an after school club. The school also altered its sports day format to encourage maximum participation in physical education. Using the theme of the Commonwealth Games, pupils of different ages were grouped together to have a go at a wide variety of sports activities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

128. Pupils at both key stages reach standards which are in line with the locally agreed syllabus. Children enjoy most lessons and are confident in talking about Jesus and ways in which he shows us how we should live. Year 3 pupils showed a mature understanding of change and forgiveness when talking, discussing the story of Zacchaeus. They explained that Jesus, who showed him that kindness is a good thing, brought about the change in Zacchaeus. They were quick point out that Jesus showed kindness in private and not just in front of everybody else. Pupils give well-considered answers to questions and are confident in raising their own questions during lessons, such as asking the teacher, 'What is a sinner?' (from the Zacchaeus story) and 'Why is he in Heaven?'
129. Reception and Year 1 pupils, showed mature reasoning and understanding of the story 'The lost, prodigal son', and talked openly about the importance of saying 'Sorry', and showing that you really mean it by future behaviour. They gave their ideas on how it felt to be forgiven and live together in peace.
130. Older pupils can confidently talk about topics they have covered and show great maturity in discussing how they believe that religious belief and faith is an individual choice. As one pupil put it, 'Nobody can make you believe in God, you do it because you want to.' Discussion and time for questioning is a strength of the subject. Although this at times, results in a lessening of written work, pupils' learning, understanding and knowledge is increased. In some lessons, worksheets are used unnecessarily, and when this is the case, pupils' learning is less well promoted.
131. Pupils show good progress in their developing knowledge of other world faiths, which is enhanced by a series of visits and visitors. Good standards of work on the multi-faith aspect of the curriculum are reflected in pupils' books and in displays around school.
132. Teaching is satisfactory throughout school and is well supported and enhanced by good teaching in PHSCE, which complements the syllabus. Higher attainers could sometimes achieve a little more when work is not challenging or interesting enough. These pupils complete the work well, but are not always given the opportunity to show their full capability. The co-ordinator manages the subject well. Through scrutiny of work and monitoring of teaching she has pinpointed these weaknesses in learning, and is currently working to improve them. She has a secure knowledge of the locally agreed syllabus and has made some adjustments to enhance the quality of the subject in the school.