

INSPECTION REPORT

St Peter's C of E Voluntary Controlled School

Marchington, Uttoxeter

LEA area:Staffordshire

Unique reference number:124262

Headteacher: Pauline Livesey

Reporting inspector: Judith Charlesworth
21501

Dates of inspection: 27th – 29th January 2003

Inspection number: 248575
Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	3 – 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Square Marchington Uttoxeter
Postcode:	ST14 8LH
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Helen Walker
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21501	Judith Charlesworth	Registered inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Music Personal, social and health education including citizenship Foundation stage Special educational needs Equal opportunities	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management Key Issues for action
20165	Howard Allen	Lay inspector		Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
22931	Cheryl Hardy	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Information Technology	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
15770	Julie Phillips	Team inspector	English Physical Education Religious Education	The quality and range of opportunities for learning

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Peter's caters for children aged from 3 to 9 years of age and is situated in the village of Marchington, a few miles from Uttoxeter in Staffordshire. It is small in comparison to other schools, and numbers have fallen over the last few years. The Foundation Stage has 14 part-time children in the nursery, taught in morning or afternoon sessions, and 12 full time children in reception. There are 58 pupils in Years 1 to 4. Apart from the nursery, pupils are taught in mixed age groups. Most have skills that are above average for their age when they join the school. Altogether, the school has seven pupils who have identified special educational needs (SEN), which is well below average. Two of these pupils have statements of their SEN. No pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average, and all but one pupil is from a white, British background. All speak English as their first language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is now working effectively, following a period of instability when standards of teaching and learning slipped. The head teacher and most of the teaching staff are new to the school, and are having a very positive effect. Leadership, management and teaching are good and pupils are now learning well. Although they still have some ground to catch up, standards are rising. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good, and pupils are learning well.
- Provision for children in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception) is very good.
- Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to school and work are very good. Their relationships with each other and with staff are excellent.
- The leadership and management of the head teacher and governing body are very good.
- The staff and governors have a strong commitment to improving the school, and the capacity to succeed.
- Parents' views of the school are very positive, and the school has re-built very good links with them.

What could be improved

- The curriculum is not sufficiently well planned or balanced, and provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is not yet satisfactory.
- There is no assessment of what pupils have learned in subjects other than English and mathematics, and the areas of learning of the Foundation Stage.
- Leadership in subjects other than English and mathematics is at a very early stage of development.
- The presentation of pupils' work is unsatisfactory.

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 not improved sufficiently since the last inspection in 1997 although this is now being rapidly addressed. After that inspection, the issues identified were all tackled, but development stalled as the school entered a period of leadership and staffing turbulence.

Some national initiatives were not fully taken on board. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics, taken as a whole, have not improved as fast as they have nationally. Several of the key weaknesses previously identified remain: information and communication technology, curriculum planning, the role of subject leaders, and assessing what pupils have learned in order to help them learn further are still weaknesses of the school. However, the new head teacher, with the support of the governing body, has successfully implemented sensible strategies to reverse the decline and speed up improvement. These are already having good effect and standards – particularly of teaching and learning - are rising. The positive ethos of the school is motivating pupils, and the atmosphere is now one of enthusiasm for learning – a change much appreciated by parents. The school has also been successful in improving the support and guidance given to pupils with behavioural difficulties, and in developing pupils’ awareness and understanding of a multi-cultural society. These were both issues for improvement in the last inspection.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
Reading	B	A	C	D
Writing	C	A	B	C
Mathematics	A	A*	B	C

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

Children entering the nursery generally have skills above those expected for their age. Almost all are confident individuals, interested in everything that they do. They apply themselves and achieve very well. These children’s skills are still well above average when they enter the reception year, and most reach the nationally accepted goals for the Foundation Stage of their education well ahead of time. Preparation for beginning work on the National Curriculum in Year 1 is good.

Pupils’ performance in the Year 2 national tests usually reflects their advanced skills but the gap between the school’s and national results has been gently closing over the past four years. However, caution should be used when looking at this data because of the low numbers in each cohort taking the tests. Nevertheless, in comparison to all schools in 2002, the proportion of pupils reaching expected standards in reading and mathematics were the lowest for four years, although still above the national average for writing and mathematics. Teacher assessment showed that the proportion of pupils reaching expected levels in science was in line with the national average. When compared to results from similar schools, a lower than average proportion reached expected levels in reading, and the proportion reaching expected levels in writing and mathematics was average. Overall, more pupils reached levels above those expected for their age than average in reading, writing and mathematics, but not in science. These results indicate that the lower and middle attaining pupils were not supported to do as well as they could, although most of the higher attaining pupils’ achievement was satisfactory. Overall, all pupils underachieved in science.

The new management and staff of the school have put good strategies into place to help pupils achieve better. There has already been a positive impact. In reading and mathematics, standards are much improved and are now above average throughout the school. Standards in writing, science, art and design and physical education are currently as expected for pupils' age throughout the school. Standards in ICT are below average in Years 3 and 4. There was insufficient evidence to judge standards attained in history, geography, music and religious education, although the standard of work seen in lessons, and conversations with pupils indicate that they are likely to be in line with expectations for their age. As a result of the improvements made recently they are likely to be above this by the time pupils leave the school. No judgements can be made on design and technology, but the lack of evidence and unsatisfactory resources suggest standards are likely to be below expectations overall. Pupils with SEN achieve well, and although the higher attaining pupils achieve well, they could do even better with more opportunity to be independent in their work. School data shows that girls do even better than boys than expected nationally, but no differences were noted in class.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school, are keen to do well and try hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave well in class, in the playground and around school. There is no bullying, although parents say this was a problem in the past.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is good. They are beginning to take more responsibility although this could still be improved. Pupils respond well to lessons in personal, social and health education, and to the supportive ethos of the school. Their relationships with each other and with staff are excellent.
Attendance	Very good. This is well above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Satisfactory

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

Teaching in the nursery and the reception year is very good because it is very carefully planned to match the children's ages and abilities while giving them the opportunity of playing and experimenting freely. The nursery is attractive and stimulating, and children's imagination is particularly well promoted. Teaching in the reception class, where there are also some Year 1 pupils, benefits from the calm approach of the teacher and very good team-work between the adults. As a result, children learn very well throughout the Foundation Stage. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good and pupils learn well. Tasks are well matched to pupils' learning needs. Some lessons are particularly creative, with the vibrancy of the teacher's personality playing a strong part in maintaining pupils' interest and helping them learn. Throughout the school, teachers' management of behaviour is very good.

Teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4 are satisfactory overall. Tasks are well-matched to pupils' needs, which is important since almost all of those in the school with SEN are in this class. Relationships with the pupils are very good, and they are treated with maturity. At times, however, this teacher's subject knowledge is less secure. This limits the amount pupils can learn. Teaching in English and mathematics is good and the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills throughout all subjects is satisfactory overall. At times, opportunities for pupils to practice literacy skills are limited by the over-use of work sheets. The presentation of pupils' work is often unsatisfactory, especially at Key Stage 2; staff are working hard to improve this. ICT is not used sufficiently to support learning in other subjects. Pupils need more practice in independent investigative work in science.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory; all work is suitably based on government guidelines. However the balance of time spent on subjects is unsatisfactory, as is the consideration of what should be taught, and when, in each subject. Currently, the amount to be covered is over-ambitious. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is good. Pupils receive individual support from a peripatetic teacher, and her work informs pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) and class work well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is good overall. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory, and for social development very good. Provision for moral and cultural development is good. Pupils' personal development is given high priority, but more opportunity could be given for them to take the initiative and make decisions for themselves.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for ensuring the welfare, protection, regular attendance and good behaviour of the pupils are good. Those for assessing what pupils have learned are unsatisfactory, except in English and mathematics, and assessment information is not yet effectively used to help planning in most subjects.

The school works very well in partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The leadership and management of the headteacher are excellent and have given a clear and much welcomed direction to the school after a period of instability. The co-ordination of the Foundation Stage is very good, but subject co-ordination is unsatisfactory overall. The teachers, who are largely new to the school, have only just taken on their subject responsibilities and other than in English and mathematics where good progress has been made, have not had sufficient time to make an impact on standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The governors have been fully aware of the school's difficulties and active in remedying them. They are playing a decisive role in securing the long-term success of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Led by the headteacher, the school has identified areas of weakness in the school's practices and pupils' skills and national test results, and has begun to address them well.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Monies are used appropriately, including those for pupils with SEN and to develop staff skills. Savings are well used to improve the facilities and resources.

Accommodation is satisfactory and improving. Resources are satisfactory overall, although unsatisfactory for design and technology and geography. The number of teaching staff is appropriate, but there are more support assistants than average in this type of school. The school applies the principles of best value well, including consulting parents, comparing its performance with other schools and taking effective action to improve.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • They feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems. • Their children are expected to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is well led and managed, and they are particularly pleased with the work of the new head • Teaching is good and children progress well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities provided outside lessons • Information about their children's progress • The amount of homework provided

Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments, but consider that there is a very good range of activities provided outside lessons. The amount of homework provided is appropriate. Written information about children's progress is satisfactory, and other opportunities are given for parents to discuss progress with staff.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

The standard assessment test (SATs) results

1. Although these results have shown a degree of variability over the past few years, the low point of 2002 can be explained by the following, a combination of which led to pupils' under-achievement.

- Statistical expectations of this cohort of pupils based on earlier assessment data cannot be made. On entry to the reception year in 1999, the standards of attainment of the cohort of pupils was higher than average in Staffordshire, although, as it happens, lower than usual for St. Peter's. In the intervening years, a large proportion of this original year group (12 pupils) left the school so that the distribution of abilities within the cohort changed. Comparing the assessment results of the pupils as a group on entry to reception in 1999 to those attained by the Year 2 pupils in 2002 to see how well they have achieved overall is therefore unreliable
- There is an unusually high number of pupils with SEN in the cohort. These pupils are now in Year 3, and together constitute six out of the seven pupils in the school with identified SEN. Whilst their special needs vary, overall these pupils' results had the effect of lowering the percentages of pupils reaching average levels in the 2002 SATs.
- There were several changes of teacher in the class for Year 2 pupils. This was of particular concern to parents. Analysis of past work shows that the lower and average attaining pupils were not challenged enough to do better. As a result, the pupils' behaviour deteriorated, and they became less motivated and interested in their work. These factors led to a drop in the standards of teaching and learning.
- Some temporary teaching and curriculum arrangements, now replaced, did not give pupils the best opportunities for learning. For example, science was not taught consistently, or given enough time overall.

Current and projected standards in English, mathematics and science

2. Standards are rising in English and mathematics. Pupils are performing well now, and the current Year 2 cohort is on line to perform better in the 2003 SATs than last year's cohort. This has been achieved by the skill of the new staff, together with commercial schemes, resources and new practices that have been brought in to support the teaching of writing, spelling, reading and mathematics. New commercially produced assessment material has also been introduced and is providing information to help determine individuals' strengths and weaknesses so that help can be focused where necessary. Staff have begun to set the pupils targets so they know themselves what they are aiming for. The school has set itself challenging targets for percentages of pupils at the end of Year 2 reaching at least the levels expected for their age in the 2004 national tests in reading, writing and mathematics. Spelling, too, is a focus of attention and is set to improve.

3. Standards in science are improving more slowly. Teaching time has been increased, the subject is now taught every week and some new resources have been purchased.

However, the subject has not been a focus for improvement yet. The youngest pupils are doing well, but the older pupils in Key Stage 1 and those in Key Stage 2 are not yet completely used to the responsibility of independent investigative work. Subject leadership has not yet properly begun and the work at Key Stage 2 is not always sufficiently challenging to raise standards to above average.

Standards in other areas of the curriculum

4. The past curriculum arrangements did not enable pupils to achieve as well as they could. Where sufficient evidence allowed a judgement to be made by inspectors, standards are currently in line with expectations for pupils' age in all subjects except ICT at Key Stage 2 where they are below. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards attained in design and technology, but it is likely that these are below expectations. The school has laid good plans to raise standards in all subjects and has made a good start by changing the curriculum. The staff are fully aware of the additional curriculum work that needs to be done, and the systems and practices such as proper subject leadership and assessment that need to be put into place in order to help pupils achieve as much as possible. Learning in lessons is good and often very good, and pupils are set to achieve higher standards in time, particularly by 2004, as gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding are filled in, and they are all challenged to achieve as much as possible.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

5. Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour, and their relationships with one another, are strengths of the school. These high standards match those found in the last inspection although some parents reported that during the year prior to September 2002, their children were increasingly reluctant to come to school. The recent change in ethos now means that pupils are once again keen to come to school, attendance is very good and very few pupils are late, allowing a prompt start to the day. Pupils work enthusiastically in lessons and even the youngest pupils concentrate for extended periods of time, for example when playing imaginatively at the water tray, or examining materials closely to identify which ones they like best. Pupils listen well to one another and to their teachers, picking up on their friends' comments to add to them, or asking questions if they do not understand the teacher's instructions. Pupils enjoy school and are articulate and confident. They are keen to talk about what they are doing and respond willingly to their teachers' questions, even if they are not absolutely sure of the answer.

6. Pupils know right from wrong and are clear about the school rules. They behave appropriately in different situations, such as in the dining room or when leaving school at the end of the day. Pupils enjoy playing outside, and use the space and equipment imaginatively. They play well together, and older pupils, especially those in Year 4, like looking after the younger ones. Parents say that there was some minor bullying in the past, but that this has stopped and their children no longer come home upset, saying, for example ".....pushed me in the playground." In class, behaviour is generally very good. There was no evidence of harassment or sexist behaviour, and boys and girls choose each other as workmates without a thought. Occasional instances of "over-excitement" arise – generally when pupils are using the hall for practical work, but are easily stopped.

7. Pupils relate very well to the staff and to other adults, showing appropriately warm but respectful relationships. At the "grandparents lunch", they greeted their own grandparents warmly and mingled and chatted with their friends' as well. Their relationships with one another develop extremely well as they grow older. In the nursery, pupils play together and share toys, activities and space with no squabbles. Throughout the school, pupils work very well in pairs and in groups, as seen in several practical tasks. Pupils can show profound

care and compassion for one another. For example, a tall girl in class 2, who was upset to see her grandparents leave after lunch, was comforted and guided gently to her seat by a tiny girl whose arm could barely reach her friend's waist. Pupils with special educational needs develop the same warm relationships as all other children in the school allowing them to be fully included in school life.

8. Pupils respond very well to the opportunities given to promote their personal development. They are rightly proud of their achievements, and delighted when they earn a *golden star*. Overall, pupils are sensible and mature, but given the opportunity, the older ones could take more responsibility for their own learning and for aspects of school life than they currently do. The oldest pupils are beginning to understand how their behaviour affects others and can discuss, for example, the value and effect of making and keeping New Year resolutions and promises. They are beginning to have an understanding of citizenship, and how the contribution of each individual goes towards the good of the whole community. Pupils are developing a good understanding of cultural influences from across the world as the curriculum is extended.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

9. There are common factors in teaching in all classes which contribute to the good standards. These are:

- excellent relationships between staff and pupils, and between the pupils themselves;
- very good behaviour management which keeps the pupils calm and interested in their work;
- good use of support staff and voluntary helpers, particularly in group work, which makes sure that pupils do not get "stuck" or have to wait for help;
- the good use of interesting activities and resources to enliven the lessons, for example the introduction of Russian clothing, chocolate and toys in geography for Years 1 and 2.

10. Time is used well with none wasted as pupils move from one activity to the next. The small size of the classes also helps pupils feel included and that their contribution is valued. Teachers use questioning well to draw out and assess what pupils know, and reinforce or clarify points if necessary. Pupils are motivated by the good teaching and make a real effort with their work. As a result, they are learning fast and older pupils are making up some of the ground lost last year. Pupils with identified SEN, and those who are learning a little more slowly than their friends, have work designed to match their needs, and, if appropriate, to support progress towards the targets identified on their IEPs. Consequently, they are achieving well too.

11. Teaching for the Foundation Stage children is very good because it manages to meet the varied needs of the children in the two classes so well. The nursery nurse in charge of the nursery is very skilled at developing children's personal and communication skills in all that they do. The nursery itself is very well laid out to be an exciting and motivating place in which to work and play. The sessions are well-structured so that the children have a mixture of activities, including short bursts of daily literacy and numeracy, which prepares them well for more structured work as they get older. Careful note is made of how well the children are learning in communication, language, literacy and mathematical development, and this information is used very well to plan the next steps for each individual.

12. Lessons in the mixed reception and Year 1 class are very well planned in great detail so that there are suitable learning objectives taken from both the Foundation Stage and National curricula to meet the needs of both year groups. These are clearly related so that all children benefit from the whole class work and can learn from each other. Children who are

learning faster or slower than others can work with older or younger peers which may be more appropriate for them at that time.

13. This methodology is well exemplified by an English lesson in which the main aim was to *re-tell the story of Cinderella through role-play and by the use of visual aids*. The learning objectives for the reception children were to sequence three or four pictures in the right order, and to express their understanding of the story through role-play. The objectives for the Year 1 pupils were a few steps on from this – i.e. to sequence pictures of the story and to create simple sentences to go with them.

14. The individual personality of teachers does much to inspire pupils and help them learn, although they are all different. For example, the teacher of the youngest pupils is particularly calm and has high expectations of pupils to attend to her the first time they are asked. Her pupils, in turn, are also calm and very attentive as soon as she speaks. In contrast, another teacher shows particular dynamism and humour in her teaching, and pupils are on the edge of their seats with interest as she moves the lesson forwards briskly, combining questioning with the teaching of new facts.

15. Whilst there was no unsatisfactory teaching, some lessons were less effective than the rest. The underlying reason for this was that the pupils did not learn as much as they might have. On one occasion, in a religious education lesson, the objective was too difficult for the young pupils. After listening to two Bible-based stories, they had to find the “message” in them – that God loves everyone. Whilst the pupils could understand the moral of the story, the abstraction was too difficult. On another occasion in a science lesson on making electrical circuits, pupils were diverted by a drawing task which supported the lesson – to create a clown’s face whose nose would light up. The pupils spent too much time on this task, and needed too much help with it, which meant that they did not spend enough time on the real purpose of the lesson – learning about circuits.

16. Sometimes pupils did not learn enough because the pace of the lesson slowed, or because the teacher was lacking in subject knowledge and relied too heavily on following a commercial scheme from start to finish without being discriminate in what was used. In particular at Key Stage 2, there is an over-reliance on completing pre-prepared worksheets and insufficient regard as to what the pupils are to do with them afterwards. Often, worksheets are simply stapled together in topics and stored in a cardboard folder. This does not help pupils gain a sense of pride in their work, and indeed, the presentation of the older pupils’ work was often unsatisfactory. Over-use of worksheets also prevents pupils from taking the initiative with the format of their work, and analysis of past work showed that worksheets were not always matched to the needs of the pupils. Whilst the needs of the higher attaining pupils were well met during the inspection, analysis of past work indicates that at times, their work was not sufficiently challenging.

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

17. The quality and range of opportunities given to pupils for learning are satisfactory overall. However, there are some unsatisfactory elements in this aspect of the school’s work, and the curriculum has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection.

18. All required subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught, and they are well-supported by a good range of extra-curricular activities, visitors to the school and visits to relevant places of interest. Significant numbers of pupils participate in French club, choir and football, and receive tuition in violin, clarinet and flute. Jazz dance and physical education clubs are planned for the near future. Some of these require payment,

but there are appropriate arrangements to ensure that all can participate if parents find this difficult. This is in keeping with the school's equal opportunities policy whereby all pupils must have equal access to all aspects of school life.

19. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good. It includes all six areas of learning and is very thoughtfully planned to make sure that the reception-age children in Class 1 can benefit from the exciting and creative nursery environment. Planning links in well with topics and themes in Key Stage 1, for example activities were planned for children to sort materials (National Curriculum science and art) through the theme of *traditional stories*. This means that the reception children have the best of both worlds; a well-thought-out curriculum appropriate to their age, and the opportunity for extending their learning as they combine with the Year 1 pupils. Nursery planning is good with all areas of learning covered as both structured play and focused adult-led activities during the week. The learning objectives for each session are clear, as are the activities through which the children will achieve them. However, there is no overall plan to indicate which learning objectives have been covered over time, or whether they have been achieved, to ensure a balanced curriculum and to inform future planning.

20. The curriculum for the rest of the school currently presents several problems although recent improvements have strengthened it considerably. Past planning shows that all subjects of the National Curriculum were included, but the revised National Curriculum was not fully implemented in September 2000 as required, after the period of relaxation of the requirements. The balance of time given to the different subjects is still not yet right. There is an over-emphasis on English and Mathematics and the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. Literacy and numeracy lessons tend to be longer than recommended, and there are also additional lessons in some classes for reading and spelling. Subject specialist teachers have been employed to teach music and physical education (now changed to religious education) for several years, and the time-table depends on when they are free to work. This results in the time allocation being too short for subjects such as history, geography and music, particularly at Key Stage 1. Although satisfactory, pupils' achievements could therefore be better. Until recently, too little time was spent on science and it was not taught consistently through the year which contributed to pupils' under-achievement last year. Assemblies sometimes take up too much time in the day.

21. For a few terms before September 2002, the school operated a different system for teaching. These arrangements did not enable pupils to achieve as much in some subjects as they could have done. The new staff have stopped this system, and from September 2002, have appropriately based the curriculum in each subject on government-recommended schemes of work and guidance. However, since these schemes of work are very extensive, and the time available to teach them is currently limited, they can not be completed in their entirety.

22. As yet, there is no overall plan to help teachers decide what they should be teaching in each subject throughout the four year groups. There is plenty of scope to leave out, reduce or combine modules of the schemes of work in various subjects where there is an over-lap of content. An example of this is where pupils in Year 1 were looking at various materials and their properties in both science and art lessons. The amount of time spent overall on the topic could easily be reduced whilst achieving the same outcome for the pupils. Teachers do this on an individual basis, but not as part of a whole-school plan. This could lead to gaps or duplication in what pupils learn over time.

23. Provision for ICT has improved since the previous inspection but is not yet satisfactory. The school has recently installed a computer suite and the new staff are keen

to complete their training in this area. However, delays in this (out of the school's control) means that the full ICT curriculum is not yet systematically taught.

24. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, and good support is given to both pupils and staff by the peripatetic teacher employed by the school. She assesses pupils carefully, establishes what they need in order to learn more effectively and works with each one individually every week. Her advice informs class staff when they write the pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) and close liaison ensures that each keeps the other informed of pupils' progress. At present, however, the specialist teacher for pupils with special educational needs does not hold copies of the IEPs which means she may not have all the information needed to support and reinforce targets that did not originate from her. Some targets on the IEPs are not sharp enough for progress towards them to be accurately measured.

25. The school makes good provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and pupils' personal development. Much support and guidance is given informally, through the ethos of the school. In addition, newly introduced PSHE lessons based on a commercial scheme of work, and *Circle Time* where pupils are encouraged to discuss and share opinions and feelings, are having a positive impact. They contribute well to the excellent relationships and positive atmosphere throughout the school. This area of the school's work could be further improved if topics were linked in with other curriculum areas to avoid duplication and save time. For example, health education often combines well with aspects of science, such as healthy eating and safety when using electricity.

26. The good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is maintained by the caring, family ethos of the school. Pupils are encouraged to share, to think about the needs of others, and how they can help those less fortunate than themselves. They work hard to raise money for charities such as the Catherine House Hospice and Children in Need, and they sold local produce to raise money for gifts for children in Belarusse. Pupils are taught to consider what is right and wrong, both directly in discussion and indirectly, for instance, through the use of stories in assemblies. Opportunities to extend spiritual awareness are sometimes overlooked in everyday lessons. Nonetheless, provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Opportunities for spiritual reflection arise through well-chosen pieces of music played before and after assembly, the lighting of candles and from prayer. At Christmas, there was a 'wish box' in the entrance hall for pupils to post their wishes for others, and the school Advent calendar revealed good deeds, such as *lay the table for my Mum* as Christmas approached. Parents are very positive about the role of the new vicar in school.

27. The provision for pupils' cultural development has improved considerably since the last inspection. The school is successful in developing an understanding of local and traditional British culture through visits, visitors and lessons such as art, music and history. Their Christmas performance was *The Nutcracker*, based on the famous work by Tchaikovsky, and was delightful to watch. Multi-cultural awareness is now promoted effectively through activities such as visiting a local mosque, and discussing the cultural meanings associated with water in Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. The headteacher has worked in several different countries and is very keen to bring a real, living knowledge of other cultures into school. Her focus this term is Russia, and next term will be Japan. Recently, she has provided opportunities for pupils to learn to answer the register in Russian or French and to examine, draw and discuss items from present day Russia. Consequently, pupils have a growing understanding of cultural influences from across the world and of their place in our society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

28. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in its provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. However insufficient progress has been made in assessing their attainment and progress in all subjects of the curriculum.

29. Nursery-age children are introduced carefully to the school, and close links with their parents are promoted by the school's open-door policy. These links are maintained throughout the year, and the nursery nurse in charge makes herself freely available to talk to parents at the end of each session. The combination of a clear structure to the day with well-thought out opportunities for the children to choose their own activities gives them a sense of security and allows them to develop initiative and decision-making.

30. Pupils have the opportunity of attending a *before-* and *after-school club* that is run by staff who are well qualified in all aspects of pupils' welfare. Whether coming in early to attend the *before-school club*, or at the start of the normal school day, pupils arrive happily and are greeted by teachers and teaching assistants. All staff at the school play a part in ensuring the pupils' needs are met. The high quality of pastoral support provided by class teachers and their assistants is complemented during the middle of the day by a team of lunchtime assistants who know the pupils well and are very capable in supporting their personal development. For example, in the dining hall even the youngest pupils are encouraged to choose what they want to eat, use cutlery appropriately and to clear away after they have finished eating. The pupils have developed special *lunchtime rules* such as "try not to speak with your mouth full" which they take seriously and are well-reinforced by adults. Play times are very well supervised and safe with all pupils encouraged to take part in activities such as skipping or football.

31. Child protection procedures are secure and all staff have a clear understanding of the need to report any concerns about pupils' welfare to the headteacher. The headteacher handles issues appropriately and involves parents as soon as possible, if necessary. For its size, the school has a high number of staff qualified in first aid, although the head teacher, as the *named person* for child protection, has not yet completed the appropriate training. Procedures for reporting accidents and informing parents when necessary are followed well.

32. The school has very good procedures for managing and improving the behaviour of the pupils. Parents report that behaviour had deteriorated considerably over the previous few terms. Since her arrival at the school the headteacher has introduced positive behaviour management based on rewards. Any improvement in a pupil's behaviour is now acknowledged by a gold star, which combine into a 15, 30, 45 or 60 gold star certificate that is presented in a *good news* assembly. The ultimate award is an entry in the *golden book*. These awards are valued by pupils, and parents confirm there has been a considerable improvement in behaviour this year. An additional *house points* system encourages pupils to work hard and support each other by awarding individuals points that also go towards their house total. *Circle Time* also effectively encourages pupils' personal development and good behaviour through discussion around targets that pupils consider appropriate for themselves, for example "I will try to be kind".

33. The school is very effective in maintaining high attendance levels. Much is done to encourage parents to support their children by seeing they attend school as regularly as possible and on time. The importance of pupils' attendance is commented upon in newsletters and parents support the school well by contacting the office or writing if their child is unwell and unable to attend. As a consequence there is a low level of unauthorised absence.

34. The many changes that have been introduced since the arrival of the new headteacher have all had a very positive effect on the quality of care pupils receive, and their response to it. However, they are not yet reflected in the written policies and guidance, which are based on the previous systems. The small size of the school is helpful in this respect as staff can consult easily with one-another. However, this could result in inconsistencies if staff – especially new members – are in doubt about procedures. This, and ensuring the systematic training of new staff in areas such as child protection and health and safety, are areas for development.

Assessment

35. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are unsatisfactory overall, although the systems recently introduced for English and mathematics, and in the Foundation Stage, are a great improvement. However, there is no formal assessment of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in any other subject of the curriculum. The school is aware of the shortcomings and is working hard to develop assessment procedures alongside the curriculum development, and to use assessment to support pupils' achievement in all subjects.

36. The nursery has recently moved from using its own assessment schedule for determining children's skills when they first start school, to assessing them against the nationally recommended "stepping stones" towards the Early Learning Goals for the Foundation Stage. A colour-coding system relating to when a particular element is achieved means that children's progress in both nursery and reception can be easily determined, targets formulated for individuals and support given where necessary. This system is relatively new, but is promising in terms of providing clear information about individuals. It will feed well into the new computerised system for tracking progress planned for the rest of the school.

37. The school has analysed the most recent national test data for the Year 2 pupils, and has identified weaknesses in reading and writing, particularly amongst the middle and lower attaining pupils. Appropriate measures have been introduced to raise standards in pupils' attainment overall, and in these areas in particular.

38. The new systems for more regular assessment in English and mathematics are based on commercial schemes which assess pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding whilst identifying particular strengths and weaknesses. The school can use this information to plan for more effective support and learning. In the limited time since the systems' introduction, the information has been used to track progress over a short period, identify pupils' weaknesses to inform their personal targets and to re-group them in class. However, it has not yet been used to support curriculum planning.

39. Currently there is no formal whole-school tracking system to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance in tests over time so that the *value added* by the school can be calculated. Such systems identify how well pupils are achieving, help schools assess the quality of their own provision, and inform whole-school target setting for levels of attainment in (at least) English and mathematics. The school has rightly identified this as a priority. A computerised system has been purchased and the school is ready to start tracking individuals' progress from the time they join, once the staff have been trained to use it.

40. Teachers make informal assessments during lessons and these are used to reinforce points on the spot, inform future lesson planning and to match work to pupils' needs. Although teachers plan effectively for lessons, opportunities for assessing what pupils

have learnt are not consistently identified. Marking of work is still inconsistent, as was found in the last inspection. It often does not provide enough support and guidance to the pupils on how to improve their work. Neither assessment nor marking follow the school's policy guidelines.

41. All pupils have targets for improvement and these are displayed in the classrooms and in their individual work boxes. Pupils know why they have targets and work hard to achieve them. The introduction of *assessment books* for the regular assessment of particular pieces of English work now ensures that all pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve. These have recently been started in the nursery where children write their name, draw a picture and describe it (written down by staff) at regular intervals, and will be added to throughout their time in school to form a record of their achievement in this area.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

42. The school has resumed the very good links with parents noted in the last inspection, after going through a "bad patch". Parents are happy that the arrival of the new headteacher has resulted in the school's good reputation within the local community being restored. The school values the contribution parents make in supporting their children's education and tries hard to ensure parents feel confident in doing so. These close and positive links begin when children first start attending the nursery, and are maintained throughout their time in the school.

43. The school has an open door policy that is valued by parents. They acknowledge that the headteacher goes out of her way to make herself available to them. The headteacher and teachers escort pupils to the gate and are available to talk to parents at the end of the school day. Most parents feel comfortable in contacting the school at any time if they have concerns about their children and confirm they are always well received when they come to school.

44. The school now holds three consultation evenings each year where parents can discuss their children's progress and the targets they are working towards. Workshops and courses are also organised to help parents understand the school's work. For example, the school has recently organised a numeracy workshop for parents, and pupils are encouraged to take numeracy games home for the family to use together. The school is fortunate in that many parents help in lessons and on school visits, which staff, parents and pupils find very beneficial. Parents willingly give their support to the Marchington School Association which is very successful in raising funds to provide additional resources. For example over £8,000 has been raised in the last 9 months towards a new school library. Parents value the opportunity to watch school performances such as the Christmas *Nutcracker*, and acknowledge the effort the school makes to help them feel welcome, for example by arranging crèches and refreshments.

45. Reading diaries are well used as a means of home-school communication, and other home-school information exchange books are used for pupils with particular difficulties. In addition, the school has other home-school link books, but parents feel, and inspectors agree, there are too many formats of home-school books, and the regularity of their use and quality of information received varies between classes.

46. Other information parents receive is of good quality. Parents appreciate the weekly newsletters as a means of letting them know about future events and what is going on in school, and know to ask their children for a copy each Friday. Outline curriculum information is given in the newsletter at the start of a new term. This helps parents understand what their children are learning at school and enables them to reinforce this at home. The annual reports on pupils' progress are of a good standard. They are individual to each pupil and also

give the next set of targets that pupils will be working towards. Some parents feel that the format of the reports could be improved and the school has taken note of this criticism and confirmed to parents that the format will be revised for this year's reports. This is one example of the way the school solicits parents' views and acts to remedy any issues they may have.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. St Peter's was a good school at the time of the previous inspection. Although areas for improvement were identified, the standards attained by the pupils were above average, and the quality of education, leadership and management provided were all good. The school had a good reputation in the community, and parents were pleased with its effect on their children.

48. From January 2001 to September 2002, changes in the leadership and management of the school, and a very high turnover of teaching staff, meant that many of the established procedures and practices were not continued. Developments and changes such as new teaching methodologies were introduced, but were not seen through. The key issues for improvement arising out of the inspection were not fully addressed. The quality of education provided, including the teaching, suffered, and the school stood still. The positive ethos for learning was lost; some pupils were reluctant to come to school, behaviour deteriorated and, understandably, parents became worried. A small number withdrew their children which coincided with a high number leaving the school for other reasons, such as moving to home-based education, or leaving the area. Fourteen per cent of the pupil population left the school during this time.

49. The current headteacher took up her post in September 2002. Her grasp of the position the school was in, her identification of what needed to be done and her commitment to improving the quality of provision for the pupils were excellent. She immediately began the process of improving standards in all aspects of the school's work. The teaching staff – all but one part-time teacher new to the school – are capable and highly supportive of the plans to move the school forward. They are enthused by the sense of purpose and direction in the school, and are working hard and with outstanding commitment to enable the plans to succeed. The pupils, too, are motivated by the change in atmosphere, and the support and growing responsibility given to them as individuals. They are now keen to come to school, to behave well and to learn as much as they can. At the parents' meeting with the Registered Inspector, and in the questionnaires, many parents said how pleased they are with the change in the school, and what a difference this has made to the attitude and progress of their children.

50. The school's draft development plan was drawn up in autumn 2002 and lists 19 key priorities. Work has already begun on many of them. Raising standards of attainment is, overall, the first priority. The school's managers are aware that the priorities need refining and re-prioritising, and that it will take time to address them fully and see their impact. The plan does not currently reflect the ongoing review of all existing policies to keep them up to date, or outline the introduction of new policies and related matters, such as the *accessibility plan* for disabled pupils.

51. Current priorities include, for example: to accelerate the rate of learning in the Foundation Stage; to raise the standards of spelling by 2004; to develop a programme to challenge the higher attaining pupils; to develop the outdoor play area for the Foundation Stage. The key issues remaining from the previous inspection are also included. Good progress has already been made with many of these priorities. For example, in order to develop the Foundation Stage, a new co-ordinator has been appointed to oversee and plan

the work of both nursery and reception children; classroom resources and the outdoor play areas have been improved; the curriculum has been extended and work is carefully planned to cover all the Early Learning Goals whilst also matching in with the Key Stage 1 topics. The early steps of literacy and numeracy are now properly addressed. As a result, children are now learning very well and attaining above levels expected for their age. The school's first key priority (and some others) has therefore been achieved. Much has recently been done to complete the work started on the key issues arising out of the previous inspection, although there is still some way to go on some of them.

52. The co-ordination of the Foundation Stage is very good, and the nursery nurse who is responsible for the nursery is very capable and makes a very good contribution to the children's development. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they achieve well against their personal targets. The headteacher, in her role as SEN co-ordinator, keeps all pupils with special needs under review to ensure that they are appropriately placed on one of the three *stages*. Since September 2002, three pupils who were inappropriately identified as having SEN have been removed from the SEN register altogether.

53. The role of subject-co-ordinators is very under-developed, other than in English and mathematics. This is because altogether, there are only four teachers and all but one are new to the school. Each one, including the headteacher, has several subject responsibilities. The fourth teacher (part-time) has just returned after six months' maternity leave. Subject responsibilities have only recently been negotiated with the staff, and one co-ordinator for three subjects, for example, had only been in school nine days before the inspection began. Priority has appropriately been given to English, mathematics and the Foundation Stage, and standards are already rising as a result. However, the managers are fully aware that subject leadership needs to extend further in order to support the raising of standards across all subjects.

54. Performance management is used well to monitor and evaluate teaching; the head teacher has already had targets set by the governors, and is in the process of reviewing the teaching staff. Support staff, usefully, are included in the performance management system. The managers are aware that the school has a much greater than average number of support staff, and that the cost-effectiveness of this, and their deployment, should be reviewed to ensure best value.

55. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities very well. During the period of instability in the school, the Chair and Vice Chair of governors, at their instigation, liaised with the Local Education Authority to try and improve the situation. Their efforts made a considerable contribution to sorting out the difficulties. The procedures for the appointment of the new head teacher were rigorous, and they continue to work in close liaison with her to support school development.

56. A committee structure keeps governors well informed of the school's work, and most are frequent visitors. They are actively involved in policy making, and monitoring and evaluating the school's provision. The headteacher and governors are well supported by the long serving school secretary who has a very good understanding of the financial affairs of the school. Governors are well briefed prior to finance meetings as in addition to a budget print-out, the secretary provides a detailed explanatory report. Spending priorities are linked to priorities in the school improvement plan, and the governors have a suitably strategic view – for example earmarking a larger than usual sum of money for staff training this year, in the light of so many new staff joining the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. In order to maintain the strengths of the school, improve the weaknesses and continue to raise the standards attained by the pupils and improve their achievement, the governing body, head teacher and school staff should:

(1) In order to improve the curriculum to maximise learning:

*a. Review the time spent on teaching each area of the curriculum so that it is better balanced; (paragraphs: 20, 79, 86, 124)

*b. Make a strategic review of each area of the curriculum to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication or excess in the content of what is taught, and that plans are achievable in the time available, whilst still meeting statutory requirements; (paragraphs: 21, 117, 129)

*c. Ensure that ICT is systematically taught throughout the school; (paragraphs: 23, 109, 111, 112)

(2) In order to improve assessment as a support to learning:

*a. Develop and implement systems of identifying and tracking pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in all subjects of the curriculum;

*b. Use this information to plan for individuals' achievement, to plan lessons and to contribute to longer term planning; (paragraphs: 35, 38, 39, 96, 101, 106, 113, 114, 126, 130)

(3) In order to improve the provision, teaching and learning in each subject:

*a. Develop a staged approach to subject development, through the subject leaders and the school development plan, whereby all subjects are the focus of development and resourcing; (paragraphs: 53, 96, 101, 107, 109, 119, 130)

b. This should begin with science; (paragraphs: 3, 20, 90, 91, 93, 94)

(4) In order to improve standards in all subjects:

a. Develop methods to support, encourage and ensure that pupils present their work well;

b. Ensure that these are applied consistently in each subject of the curriculum; (paragraphs: 16, 76, 94, 102, 127)

* indicates that this item is already in the school development plan

In addition, the governing body should consider including the following in their action plan:

- Reviewing the use of worksheets; (paragraphs: 16, 76, 85, 94, 127)
- Ensuring marking of work is properly and consistently carried out; (paragraphs: 40, 76, 78, 86)
- Reviewing the amount of time spent on assemblies; (paragraph: 20)
- Including a programme of policy and guidance review and renewal in the school improvement plan ; (paragraphs: 34, 50)
- Giving older pupils more responsibility; (paragraphs: 8, 74)
- Reviewing the number and deployment of support staff to ensure best value; (paragraph: 54)
- Standardising home-school books; (paragraph: 45)

- Improving the use of sketch books in art; (paragraph: 99)
- Improving resources for geography and design and technology; (paragraphs: 107, 131)

When planning for these improvements, the school should take into account the very small number of teachers available to do this work, and set realistic timescales for completion.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	19

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	7	8	10	0	0	0
Percentage	4	27	31	38	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 just under four percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	7	70
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		7

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	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.5

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.4

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

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

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

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Total	10	12	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	77 (93)	92 (93)	85 (93)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Total	11	10	12
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (93)	77 (93)	92 (93)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

Separate figures are not given for boys and girls when numbers are 10 or less.

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	69		
White – Irish			
White – any other White background			
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean			
Mixed – White and Black African			
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background	1		
Asian or Asian British – Indian			
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani			
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background			
Black or Black British – Caribbean			
Black or Black British – African			
Black or Black British – any other Black background			
Chinese			
Any other ethnic group			
No ethnic group recorded			

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Yr – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.8:1
Average class size	23.3

Education support staff: Yr – Y4

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	109

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	109
Number of pupils per FTE adult	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	233349
Total expenditure	228624
Expenditure per pupil	2419
Balance brought forward from previous year	18950
Balance carried forward to next year	*23675
*includes £10648 earmarked funding for 2001-2 expenditure, making an actual carry forward of £13027.	

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	77
Number of questionnaires returned	54

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	31	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	44	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	54	0	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	57	7	0	0
The teaching is good.	50	46	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	57	7	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	24	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	33	0	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	41	41	11	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	52	30	6	2	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	44	2	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	50	11	0	6

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

Personal, social and emotional development

58. Children achieve very well in this area and teaching is very good. In the nursery, children's personal, social and emotional development is supported through all that they do. The nursery nurse's relationship with these young children is excellent and she is skilful in supporting their responses with sensitivity so that they feel valued and that their contribution is important. The sessions are very well structured so that the children understand the routine of the day which gives them a sense of security and anticipation of what will happen next. They are quick to respond to instructions, for example to finish what they are doing and come to the table. Several of the children have already achieved some of the nationally devised Early Learning Goals for this area of their development, which is well ahead of time. For example, they are interested, excited and motivated to learn, as demonstrated in all that they do; they can concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate, such as during group work or story; and they form very good relationships with adults and their peers, playing happily and imaginatively together. Their behaviour is very good and their sense of responsibility is well developed by activities such as helping to clear away, and taking turns to be the class' *special helper*. Children's awareness of our multi-cultural society is well-promoted by books, resources, topics such as the Chinese New Year and helpful support by staff, for example reminding children of the full range of skin colours they might use in their portraits.

59. The children's personal development continues to grow rapidly in their reception year. They benefit from working and playing with the older pupils, who are good role models for them, and also from the frequent use of the nursery where they can use the play-based resources. The reception teacher plans very well to ensure that the reception children move steadily towards the Early Learning in this area through the other areas of learning, and also through the sessions dedicated to PSHE and subjects such as religious education. She fully acknowledges the young age of the reception children in both her teaching approach and plans. The children build on their success in the nursery and reach the Early Learning Goals for this area quickly. At the time of the inspection, still two terms before the end of the Foundation Stage, almost all children are confident when trying out new activities, and understand a range of feelings associated with events, such as happiness when a lost person is found. They take turns and share fairly, and understand the purpose of rules such as the *dining room* or *school rules*. They understand the consequences of their actions for others, for example that their parents would be sad and cross if they deliberately made holes in their clothes. Children dress and undress for PE, and manage their own personal hygiene independently. They understand that people have different cultures and beliefs and that these should be treated with respect.

Communication, language and literacy

60. Children achieve very well in this area and teaching is very good. A more structured approach to the teaching of communication, language and literacy has recently been introduced in the nursery which has helped the children to build up their skills systematically. This is reinforced by individual targets for writing for each child. The start of each session includes work on letter sounds, and these are well reinforced by support staff who prompt the children at other times, such as when writing their name on a picture. Activities to support the development of communication, language and literacy are very well thought out, and are practised through games and the theme of the week. This was the story of Cinderella during the inspection, and one of the children's tasks was to write an invitation to Cinderella's ball.

Frequent opportunities are given for children to develop speaking and listening skills, such as during story and *Circle Time*. The nursery is rich in literacy-based resources, such as books, dressing-up clothes and labels. Activities are captioned in *can you...* phrases, to draw the children in and set them challenges. For example, a large display and activity relating to a previous traditional story, *The Princess and the Pea*, was captioned *Can you match the fabric to the mattresses on the bed?*

61. Some nursery children have already reached the Early Learning Goals for communication and language. They listen very carefully and are able to carry on and add to a conversation with either adults or peers, taking proper turns. The language of a few is very complex for their age; for example one child said “Harry followed me because I was in front of him” when he was telling his teacher about a journey he and his friend had taken. The children enjoy learning new words such as *portrait*, and can use language imaginatively when immersed in play, either on their own or with others. Their reading and writing skills are less advanced, but are still good for their age. Most are still writing “scribble” with a few recognisable letters, and, apart from their own names, can only read a few other words in context, such as days of the week.

62. The reception children’s skills develop rapidly due to very good teaching. Careful planning ensures that the children are challenged at their own level, even when in a group with the Year 1 pupils. The learning objectives of the lessons are very clear and taken from both the Foundation and National curricula. This means that both year groups are working on the same concepts, but at different levels. The teacher is skilful in directing questions and giving tasks to match individuals’ needs, and knows exactly when the concentration of the reception children is about to taper off. Very good organisation means that at this point, they change to another task so their application is maintained – for example they move to group work in the nursery. Most children had already reached the Early Learning Goals for this area of learning by the time of the inspection, two terms earlier than expected. Almost all children ask sensible questions, and adjust the way they speak according to the audience. For example the language they use when explaining why they like a particular piece of material to the whole class is different to that used when acting out a part in the story of Cinderella. Children know most vowel, initial and final sounds and can make up simple three letter words. They re-tell stories in the right sequence, and read simple words independently. Children write their own names and are starting to write simple words with largely recognisable letters to describe their pictures.

Mathematical development

63. Teaching is very good and children achieve well in this area. Nursery activities are well planned to include structured work on mathematical development, and each child has a personal target for mathematical development. Structured play activities give very good additional opportunities for children to practice mathematical skills; for example *Can you build a wall three bricks high around the castle?* Sessions generally start with specific activities to develop children’s mathematical skills, such as number recognition. The nursery nurse’s questioning is skilful, and based on her knowledge of each child’s current skills. For example, in a session on finding the missing numbers on a clock face, each child in the group was asked to identify a missing one that s/he was at the cusp of learning securely. This constant challenge supports the children’s good progress. A small minority of children have already achieved some of the Early Learning Goals for this area of learning. These children can use numbers to 10 in everyday language, reliably count 10 objects and recognise numbers to 10. They understand that adding makes *more*, and that taking away makes *less*. The majority of children are advanced in their mathematical development, but not to the same extent as they are in communication and language. Most children can count

to 10 and most recognise numerals to 3. A few are starting to write the numbers 1-3. Most recognise and name a range of shapes.

64. The lesson observed for the reception pupils was excellent. It was based on high quality planning for each year group in the class, and an excellent learning environment created by a rich, varied and stimulating mix of games and resources, supported by the skilled work of the teacher and assistants. The tasks were very well matched to individuals' needs so that all pupils, whatever their age and ability, had to think hard to succeed. The children found tasks difficult at the start of the lesson observed, but were finding alternative ways of solving the problems by the end of the lesson. Their motivation was extremely high, and they made excellent progress. This quality of teaching has enabled most children to achieve the Early Learning Goals in mathematical development by the time of the inspection, two terms early. They use their mathematical knowledge and skills to solve simple, practical problems, such as how to make towers of 10 in various ways, and can find one and sometimes two more or less than a number between one and 10. Children can order items by length and height, measure using standard and non-standard units, and use everyday words to describe position.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

65. Evidence for this area of learning was limited, but children achieved well in what was seen, and the teaching observed was good. Nursery children's knowledge and understanding of the world is well-supported by other areas of learning, such as provision for creative development. Direct teaching was observed in designing and making and ICT, and both were good. Children were supported to try things out for themselves, for example to make a two-sided figure whose face was happy on one side and sad on the other. Apart from some initial help, the children were free to find materials and tools of their own choice to complete the figure, which they did with skill and purpose, for example fixing wool *hair* on with sticky tape. They were encouraged to think about the emotions associated with each face. In ICT a computer screen was prepared with an open text box for children to write their invitation to Cinderella's ball, and they were prompted to think what they would need to tell guests, for example the time and place. Children's skills indicate that they are further along the *stepping stones* in these two aspects than expected for their age. The nursery is well set out to support children's knowledge and understanding of the world. They are constantly invited to *look at* and *try* which sets them a much-welcomed challenge. Planning and resources show that other aspects of this area of learning are addressed, but there is no overall plan to ensure balance is maintained between them in the activities presented.

66. A science lesson was observed in Class 1 in which reception children moved forward very well in their knowledge and understanding of the world. This lesson was very well planned and carried out with clear learning objectives for each of the two year groups. The children were motivated by the thought that they were *investigators* and the teacher passed on her use of the scientific terms naturally. For example, the children understood that they would *predict* which material would be best to make a waterproof roof for Cinderella's coach, and *test* a range of materials to validate their prediction. Learning was very good in this lesson. One of the objectives of a religious education lesson taken by a specialist teacher was too difficult for the reception children. Although they listened very well and understood the two Bible stories, they could not describe the shared message of the stories. Nevertheless, they had a clear understanding of Christian belief, which showed that they had achieved this particular Early Learning Goal. Limited evidence in this area of learning means that the quality of teaching and children's achievement can not be judged overall.

Physical development

67. Children's physical development is good. No direct teaching by the nursery nurse was observed, but classroom provision is good for this area in the nursery. The nursery is well set-up to promote children's physical development, and most are further along the *stepping stones* than expected for their age. The children use small items of equipment, tools, objects and construction materials safely and with increasing control. They use pencils and crayons for making marks on paper, and make models of their own choice with play dough, using simple tools to mould it. Children use small world toys with dexterity; for example a child who was deeply engaged in imaginative play spent a long time loading up a small boat with people and animals so that it balanced, and then floated it across the water tray. In the playground, children run, play and use wheeled toys freely, showing a good awareness of space, themselves and others. In a physical education lesson in the hall, most children moved safely with confidence and co-ordination, and understood that the exercise made their hearts beat faster.

68. Reception children have achieved the Early Learning Goals for physical development. They use pencils with increasing control, and can manipulate small items easily such as linking-bricks and scissors. Teaching is very good in physical education and dance. The teacher uses appropriate vocabulary and maintains very good control whilst motivating the children. She demonstrates what she wants the children to do, and organises them to work in pairs with an older partner. The children watch closely and learn from one another very successfully. The children move with control, co-ordination, expression and good awareness of space. They copy given movements, such as jumping from a low position and rolling, moving to a beat of three, and curtseying and bowing in preparation for waltzing at the forthcoming Cinderella's ball.

Creative development

69. Children's creative development is good, and teaching is good in this area. Children's skills are advanced for their age, and they achieve the Early Learning Goals for this area before time. The nursery promotes children's imagination and creativity particularly well, and reception children have equal benefit due to very good organisation and planning. The current theme of *Traditional Stories* provides a rich source of opportunities for developing children's role-play and imagination, whilst incorporating other areas of creativity. Through these activities, children explore colour, texture and shape and how they can be combined. For example, the *writing area* was transformed into a fairy tale castle, hung with portraits painted by the children themselves –entitled *Queen Molly* and *King Oliver*. The portraits were well painted because before they started, the assistant reinforced the need to look carefully at what features made up a face, and reminded the children that there were more skin tones than variations on pink. The children's comments, such as "I can make nostrils on the queen" are *scribed* under their pictures, which reinforces the importance of writing. One whole wall showed the Princess asleep on top of a tower of mattresses covering a pea, which the children had clearly made themselves (with support). A perfectly laid tea table included "home-made" jam tarts made by *The Queen of Hearts*. The re-developed outside play area also makes a very good contribution to children's creative development. The newly installed play house at the end of the playground takes on different roles, and is equipped with resources to support the current theme. Music is not given the same emphasis in the nursery as other areas of creativity. Reception children contribute to and enjoy these activities, and in addition take part in art, music, drama and dance lessons which develop their creativity very well, and beyond levels expected for their age.

ENGLISH

70. Most pupils enter the school with above average standards in communication, language and literacy. Annual national test results in reading and writing at the end of Year 2 usually reflect these high levels of attainment. However, in 2002, they showed a decline, particularly in reading where they fell to average levels, and when compared to similar schools, were below average. In the test results in writing, pupils' results were above the national average, and average when compared to similar schools. Further analysis of the data shows that more pupils than average reached the level expected of nine year olds in reading and writing. However, many more than average failed to reach the level expected for their age (seven) in reading which indicates that the middle and lower attaining pupils were not sufficiently challenged. This was not the case in writing.

71. Since September 2002, the school has successfully begun to address the fall in standards. Subject leadership is good and with the introduction of new resources, the National Literacy Strategy is now having a good effect on developing the pupils' skills. New assessment procedures have been introduced which identify where pupils need particular support, and a range of new books and resources for developing writing and comprehension skills have been brought in. Pupils also have personal targets in English which encourages them to try hard and achieve them. Standards are rising as a result of these measures. Inspection findings show that the standards of speaking, listening and reading of pupils in Years 2 and 4 are on line to be above national averages by the end of the school year.

72. Pupils are attentive and eager to participate in lessons and as a result become fluent and confident when expressing ideas and opinions. This starts with the youngest children in the school who are encouraged, for example, to describe what exactly they like about an item such as a piece of material. In Year 2, pupils listen carefully to the teacher and to texts they share in class. They acquire new vocabulary at a good rate, and use it well in their conversation and work. Older pupils in Years 3 and 4 discuss their work with each other using subject-based vocabulary, such as *circuit* and *crocodile clip* in science, and respond particularly well to effective questioning.

73. Pupils' reading skills are now developing well as they respond to the new arrangements and resources. Throughout the school, they enjoy reading and talk enthusiastically about the books they read at school and home. The home-school reading diary contributes effectively to pupils' eagerness to succeed and the pleasure they find in reading. Reading skills are built up systematically from an early age, as pupils learn to recognise whole words that are frequently used, and to tackle unfamiliar words by putting together the letters and sounds. By Year 2, higher attaining pupils read confidently and know some of the rules of punctuation and grammar to help them read with expression and meaning. They understand the meaning of, and use, words such as *phoneme* and *blend*, and can spell relatively difficult words such as *caught* and *hedge*. Those who have more difficulty in learning to read have the skills to work out most of the words they come across, although they are not yet fluent. Pupils read a wide range of texts, including fiction and information books, poetry and instructions. All pupils know that a book has a title, an author and often a glossary. They understand the concept of the main characters, such as Cinderella and the Prince.

74. Most pupils in Years 3 and 4 are confident and fluent readers of fiction and non-fiction texts. Higher attaining pupils read for information, using research skills such as scanning the text, and using the index. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support to develop their English skills during individual sessions with a peripatetic teacher, and through being given appropriate work well matched to their needs. Pupils understand that the language of texts changes when used for different purposes. For example, instructions are

not written in the same way as stories. Pupils express personal preferences and opinions about important events in their books.

75. In Years 1 and 2, the new methods of teaching and resources are having a beneficial effect on pupils' writing. This is developing well and by Year 2 the majority of pupils are becoming independent writers and are on target to perform in line with national averages in the next national tests. The school predicts better results in the tests of 2004, as pupils will have had the benefit of two years' emphasis on writing. In Year 1, most pupils write legibly with correct formation of letters. They spell simple, frequently used words correctly, and try hard to spell more unfamiliar words by sounding them out. By Year 2, most know why punctuation is important and use capital letters and full stops appropriately. Some pupils' writing is neat and regular. They can write sentences of various complexity to describe pictures, and are starting to vary their sentence structure, using connecting words such as *when*.

76. Inspection findings indicate that the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work in Years 3 and 4 is often unsatisfactory. This is particularly the case in work completed early in the school year, and in the last school year, when it was often poor. Pupils' work is now improving because support for their handwriting skills, for example the re-introduction of lines to write on, expectations for the use of margins and under-lining of titles, and a commercial scheme, are having a positive impact. Some written work exhibited on the walls was of good quality, but this is not always the case. Opportunities for developing pupils' writing skills are still restricted by the over-use of worksheets and the lack of suitably developmental marking. These are preventing improvement being as rapid as it could be. Nevertheless, by Year 4, pupils' writing skills are, overall, in line with expectations for their age. They use increasingly sophisticated punctuation such as apostrophes and exclamation marks, and write in an appropriate range of styles for different purposes. Higher attaining pupils write long pieces of neatly produced work, using paragraphs, adjectives, adverbs and an appropriate structure to their writing. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs try hard and produce work in line with their abilities.

77. Teaching is good, and much is very good. Lessons are appropriately planned to match work to the needs of all pupils in the mixed year groups, and gives them sufficient challenge and interest to learn well. Pupils with special educational needs and those who learn more slowly are well catered for by suitable work and good support and achieve well. Tasks are carefully planned to build on previous learning, and literacy makes a good contribution to other curriculum areas. For example, a Year 1 pupil composed an invitation on the computer, as part of the ICT component of the curriculum, and with minimal help, wrote: "Pls can rpsahn cum to a bul in the hul at 12 o cloc on Friday." Very good, natural questioning draws out and motivates the pupils to go one step further, and really think. For example, in a concluding session, the younger pupils responded to the teacher's challenge of suggesting new *golden words*, and offered *delicate* and *a puff of smoke*. Sufficient time is given at the end of lessons for pupils to discuss what they have learned, which gives the teacher the opportunity to assess them. For instance, the older pupils showed clearly that they understood the format and purpose of instructional text after a lesson on writing instructions for making pancakes.

78. Samples of pupils' work completed prior to September 2002 indicate considerable variations in the quality of teaching and learning between year groups. Since September, however, there has been a marked improvement in presentation and the quality of marking. However, while some teachers write constructive comments on pupils' written work, some of the marking is still too brief to help the pupils understand how to improve the quality of their writing.

79. The amount of time devoted to the teaching of English is high. Whilst this has been beneficial to the recent rapid rise in standards of attainment, the time available for other subjects is limited and a preliminary review of the timetable indicates that English needs to be taught more economically. Resources for the teaching of English are good, and the proposed new school library will increase these further, and be of considerable benefit to pupils' independent research skills.

MATHEMATICS

80. Most pupils enter the school with above average standards in mathematical development. This is usually reflected in the annual national mathematics test results at the end of Year 2 where results were at least well above average between 1999-2001. The 2002 test results showed a decline although they were still above the national average. Results were average when compared to similar schools. Further analysis of the data shows that considerably more pupils than average reached the level expected of nine year olds, but many fewer than average reached the levels expected for their own age (seven.) This indicates that the middle and lower attaining pupils were not supported to do as well as they could.

81. Changes within the school staff and organisation have begun to successfully address the decline in results. Standards observed in completed work and lessons at Key Stage 1 show that pupils are working above national expectations for their age, and are showing skill and confidence in calculation methods, including mental calculations and the effective use of a *number line*. The youngest pupils use ICT confidently to solve simple mathematical problems.

82. Pupils in Key Stage 1 learn very well. The youngest count confidently up to 50 and back and older pupils can readily find doubles of two digit numbers up to 20, such as 17 to 34, and complements to 10 and 20. All identify odd and even numbers and name a range of two dimensional shapes. The youngest pupils can find a number of ways of making 10p with coins and can explain their answers and methods to their classmates. Pupils in Year 2 understand place value to 10,000, and can count on in tens from any number. They can place hands on a clock appropriately to indicate time. Pupils are developing problem-solving skills, although they are not yet confident in tackling problems independently. Pupils who learn more slowly than their peers achieve well due to work that is well matched to their needs, and to good individual support.

83. Current standards in Year 4 show that most pupils are also working above national expectations, although their progress is slower than at Key Stage 1. They enjoy mental mathematics and are becoming adept at interpreting and solving written problems, culminating, for example in the mental calculation of half of £1.40 and one quarter of 40. Most pupils use *number lines* and other supports effectively to help their calculations. They name a range of complex shapes (polygons) and know that information can be represented in various ways, such as pie charts and block graphs. The higher attaining pupils understand *reflection* and can multiply and divide simple whole numbers. They understand and work with fractions, and use mathematical terminology in their discussions and explanations. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs still have difficulty with calculations; for example one pupil could not calculate how much more 81 was than 50, and several had difficulty in performing calculations in time.

84. Teaching is good overall. It is very good at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory at Key Stage 2. In the best lessons, activities are planned in great detail so that time is used to very good effect. Teaching assistants are very well briefed and know exactly what they should do to support learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Whole class work is

well paced and includes very effective questioning, such as “What are the key words here?” and “What is this telling us to do?” Humour is used well which keeps pupils highly attentive. In a lesson with the oldest pupils, the teacher successfully encouraged pupils’ confidence by pretending to get calculations wrong herself. Pupils work very well together in pairs and in groups, supporting each other if needed. Tasks are interesting and varied and an imaginative range of resources is used. For example, jigsaws, dice, linking blocks, ladder games and ICT were all used to support calculation in a lesson for the youngest pupils. As a result of this very good teaching, pupils are highly motivated to concentrate well and work hard, and they clearly enjoy their mathematics lessons. Behaviour is consistently very good throughout lessons, which are often over an hour long. Lessons are well structured with clear learning objectives that are explained at the start so the pupils know exactly what they are working towards and are keen to achieve them. Well-chosen activities are matched carefully to pupils’ ages and abilities so that all are very well challenged. Teachers know their pupils very well and use this knowledge to interest and motivate them. In one particularly effective lesson, pupils were set individual problems to reflect their particular circumstances or hobbies, such as saving up to buy a gerbil or buying flowers for a sick grandmother. In one excellent lesson observed, a well-timed concluding session was used very effectively to check on and reinforce what pupils had learned during the lesson.

85. Where teaching is less effective, the pace tends to be slow and the lesson is geared towards maintaining pupils’ good behaviour and involvement rather than on maximum learning. The over-use of work sheets and work books from the commercial scheme can also restrict pupils’ achievement, particularly in using and applying their developing mathematical skills. Whilst work is marked regularly, comments in pupils’ books are sometimes infrequent and make few suggestions about how to improve work.

86. The management of the subject is satisfactory and is moving fast in the right direction. A published assessment scheme has been adopted which allows teachers to identify individuals’ strengths and weaknesses. This has allowed class groupings to be adjusted so that pupils work with compatible peers. However, the information does not yet inform planning on a day-to-day basis, nor do medium and long-term curriculum plans take full account of the outcomes of this half-termly testing. The newly appointed subject leader is committed to improving the teaching of the subject, but has not yet had the opportunity to monitor standards of teaching and learning in other classes. The length of lessons is often over an hour long, which is higher than average and has implications for the time available for other subjects.

SCIENCE

87. Pupils’ results in the 2002 national test results were disappointing in relation to those achieved in reading, writing and mathematics. In these subjects, well above average percentages of pupils attained levels above those expected for their age, but in science, the percentage of pupils reaching this level was average. Results in science, overall, were lower than in the other three subjects, and they were below the average for pupils from similar schools. This indicates that the science provision was not good enough to enable pupils to achieve as much as they could.

88. The new school staff have identified some of the contributory factors to this under-achievement, and have already adjusted the curriculum arrangements. Science was not taught consistently throughout the year prior to September 2002, and was taught in half-termly blocks relating to specific topics. Furthermore, well below the usual curriculum time was given to science overall. These two factors meant that pupils had insufficient opportunity to progressively build up their skills, knowledge and understanding, and to practice using and applying them in investigations. Adjustments have been made to ensure that science is now

taught every week of the school year, and that sufficient time is allocated to it. Overall, however, pupils have not yet fully made up lost ground.

89. The youngest pupils in Key Stage 1 are learning very well. They sort materials in a variety of ways, and have a good understanding of their properties. Pupils can predict how waterproof given materials are, and understand that they need to carry out tests to see if their prediction is correct.

90. By Year 2, pupils' scientific knowledge is at levels expected for their age. They know simple facts about electricity. Pupils understand that some items work with batteries, and others with electricity gained from *plugging in*. Higher attaining pupils can draw a simple electrical circuit accurately. Pupils understand simple forces, and know whether items are moved by a push or a pull. They can suggest questions to follow through in their investigations, for example *Will the truck go further than the bus?*, and can decide on standard and non-standard measuring tools – such as a metre rule and drinking straws. Pupils understand what makes an *animal* and can sort pictures into *animal/non-animal* and *living/non-living*. They can describe the life-cycle of a frog. Pupils are not yet, however, sufficiently relaxed about investigative work – a quality more prevalent amongst the youngest pupils. They tend to get over-excited and lose the scientific focus. This prevents them from recording their findings properly, and from conducting *fair tests* – even though they know what a *fair test* is. This limits their achievement at present.

91. Most pupils in Years 3 and 4 are working at levels expected for their age, but are capable of more. They are currently working on electricity and most are able to make a circuit and suggest reasons why it might not work. They know a reasonable amount about electricity in the community and how to use it safely, and use words such as *sub-station*, *pylon*, *conducts* and *insulates* freely. In an investigation, pupils can predict which materials might conduct electricity, and suggest sensible reasons for “surprises” such as why silver-coloured paper stars are conductors. Pupils have studied rocks and soils, and investigated the properties of other materials.

92. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is very good for the youngest pupils due to the teacher's scientific approach to investigations, and good level of subject knowledge. Challenging questioning is used very well to draw out and add to what pupils know and understand. Tasks, too, are challenging, but set in a motivating context for the pupils. On the occasion observed, the science topic was *investigating materials and their properties*, and the context was designing a waterproof roof for Cinderella's coach. The teacher gave very good support throughout, asking key questions such as *Why? How? What do you think?* to keep the pupils thinking and participating, and wrote down their predictions herself so they did not get bogged down in the writing task. Pupils were enthusiastic and attentive throughout this lesson, and worked sensibly and largely independently on their investigations.

93. Teaching for the older pupils in Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. At Key Stage 1, pupils became over-excited about the practical work which suggests that they are not used to the required freedom of independent investigation. However, this was managed well by the teacher, who had only been back in school for a few days after several months' absence, and the pupils carried out their investigations and brought their results back to discuss with the class.

94. Teaching at Key Stage 2 was insufficiently challenging because the teacher's subject knowledge is insecure. However, pupils were well behaved and attentive throughout the lessons, and mostly methodical when carrying out their investigations, which is the result of good preparation over time. In general, pupils are given insufficient opportunity to make their own decisions about how to present their work, particularly to write up investigations and

represent results in various forms. Too much is work sheet-based and pre-prepared for them, and the commercial scheme is used without enough selectivity, so some tasks are unnecessary. Pupils in Year 3 did not have science exercise books, although those in Year 4 had used them in the past. The worksheets do not combine to create a complete topic record that pupils can look back upon which limits their use for retrieving information and revision. There is insufficient focus on using and applying pupils' developing scientific skills, and on reinforcing the purpose and practice of fair testing. Work is still not always marked.

95. Successful elements of teaching in both classes included: setting the scientific scene well, for example by wearing professorial "glasses" and a "white coat" to get the pupils into *scientific mode*; extending thinking by good questioning; giving the pupils the opportunity of choosing resources for investigation for themselves; and matching work to meet the needs of the pupils, for example giving higher attaining pupils the opportunity of designing their own method of recording results.

96. Subject management is unsatisfactory as priority has been given to other subject areas and work has not yet begun on developing science, or working systematically towards raising standards. There is no formal means of tracking pupils' developing skills, knowledge and understanding, and lessons can not be planned on the basis of this information. The subject leader has not yet had the opportunity of monitoring teaching and learning in the different classes to support the drive to raise standards of attainment.

ART AND DESIGN

97. Due to timetabling arrangements, only two lessons in art were observed. These were both in Key Stage 1, one with reception and Year 1 pupils, and the other for Years 1 and 2. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good, and standards attained by pupils by the end of Key Stage 1 are on line to be as expected for their age. Teaching and standards attained by pupils overall cannot be judged at Key Stage 2. There was insufficient evidence of past work – portfolios of completed work are not kept - and no records are kept of pupils' developing skills, knowledge and understanding. The limited work displayed was, however, of a satisfactory standard.

98. The younger pupils in Key Stage 1 are learning to look carefully at items, and to make their own representations in a range of media such as paint and collage materials. Their application and concentration is good for their age, and they are able to discuss their views, likes and dislikes. Work relates well to the termly themes, and other curriculum areas. For example, pupils made collage mirrors to illustrate *mirror, mirror on the wall* from the traditional story of *Snow White*. In the lesson observed, pupils examined a range of materials in order to use them in weaving, which tied in with the science topic *materials and their properties*. Pupils understand the properties of the materials, for example, one pupil said that she would be able to pleat her piece. Pupils complete painted work in themed colours, such as the hot yellows, reds and oranges of summer, and the blues, white and silver of winter. Older pupils in Key Stage 1 show good painting and drawing skills, and some samples of past work show clearly that they have made good progress in representation in the recent months. Pupils are learning about the Russian artist Kandinsky, to tie in with their geography topic of Russia. They can talk confidently about their interpretation of his pictures. Pupils have created work in his style in paint, using a program on the computer, and in the lesson observed, in mixed media – sponge paint, collage and pastels. Pupils have made very good drawings of Russian buildings and churches, showing careful observation of photographic originals and including silver and gold domes.

99. Pupils at Key Stage 2 have completed work in the style of various artists, such as Chagall, using crayon/pastel colours. They have learned to blend colours together, for

example to use in the shades of the sun's rays. The quality of pupils' sketch books is poor. They are inconsistently used and do not form a record of techniques for pupils to look back upon. Pupils do not use them to refine and practice particular aspects of their work.

100. The most effective elements of the teaching observed included very good relationships and a charismatic approach to teaching, which kept pupils concentrating and applying themselves to their work for long periods of time. The teachers demonstrated new techniques, such as sponging, and encouraged the pupils to think hard about what they were seeing and doing in order to interpret it. The pupils enjoy their work, and show they can follow instructions very well. They take responsibility for their own behaviour and are sensible in a busy and often potentially "messy" environment. The teachers constantly reinforce the cross-curricular links without diluting the purpose of the lesson.

101. Planning is satisfactory and links well with other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils' skills are being systematically and appropriately built up, however, there is no formal means of assessing and tracking them, so longer-term planning can not be based on this information. Planning is based on national guidance and has not been tailored to the school's needs. At the moment, the planned coverage is over-ambitious in the time available. Subject leadership has not yet taken off, as priority has been given to other subjects of the curriculum.

GEOGRAPHY

102. Due to timetabling arrangements, only two lessons in geography were observed, one with Year 1 and 2 pupils, and the other for Years 3 and 4. The quality of teaching and learning in both lessons observed was good. However, judgements on teaching and learning overall cannot be made as no records are kept of pupils' developing skills, knowledge and understanding. There was insufficient evidence in past work to indicate pupils' real knowledge and understanding. At Key Stage 2, too much is worksheet-based, relying on short, closed answers. The quality of presentation of past work is often unsatisfactory, and overall, not useful to pupils.

103. The older pupils in Key Stage 1 show an impressive amount of knowledge and understanding of the location, culture and other aspects of Russia. They are learning to use secondary sources of information such as pictures, photographs and world maps to gather information, compare localities and form their own opinions about places. Pupils know some of the many differences between England and Russia. They talk confidently about differences in language, the weather, the appearance of churches, and housing. They remember important details, for example that "golden domes are for Jesus, and silver domes are for Mary". They are able to suggest ways in which information on the differences might be represented, such as flow charts, picture chart and Venn diagram, which supports their work in mathematics and science well. Pupils understand why so many items in Russia are made from wood, and that Moscow is not near the equator.

104. Pupils in Key Stage 2 show an extended knowledge and understanding of the differences between places, and more advanced geographical skills. They understand how the earth's movement affects the climate, and can read climatic maps to find cold dry countries, and those on the equator. They can compare and contrast the climates of these countries with that of Great Britain. Pupils understand and are beginning to use geographical terms such as *equatorial* and *temperate*.

105. The most effective elements of the teaching observed included very good relationships and very good use of resources and demonstrations which kept the pupils interested and motivated. Questioning was used very well to draw out and add to what pupils

knew. In the lesson at Key Stage 1, a wide range of Russian items, such as clothing, toys, photographs and chocolate, were used as the basis for teaching facts about Russian culture. These were combined in a display with well-phrased interactive questions to keep the pupils' interest and involvement, such as *What is the weather like in the winter?* Further reinforcement of the need for communities to adapt to the climates was made during the lesson, for example by asking the pupils *Why do the hats have ear flaps?* At Key Stage 2, a good demonstration of how the earth moves round the sun, coupled with globes, maps and big books all combined to help pupils understand how the variations in climate around the world are caused.

106. Planning is satisfactory and based on the government-produced guidelines but analysis shows that too little teaching time is currently given to geography. Pupils' geographical skills are being systematically developed, however, there is no formal means of assessing and tracking them, so longer-term planning can not be based on this information. Subject leadership has not yet begun, as priority has been given to other subjects of the curriculum.

107. Resources are unsatisfactory and need updating. There are insufficient games and books to support the subject; some large maps are out of date and there are insufficient class atlases and globes. Resources are supplemented by loans from the Staffordshire resource centre, but although of good quality, they are not available in class-size quantities.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

108. Improving the provision and standards attained by pupils in ICT was a key issue in the last inspection, and this has not yet been satisfactorily achieved. Standards are just in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1, and in Key Stage 2, standards are lower than they should be in both year groups. However, the school has worked very hard to improve this situation since September 2002. A new suite of computers has been installed, a new subject leader has been appointed and teachers are working to national guidelines for the subject. ICT is beginning to be incorporated into all subjects of the curriculum. As a result, pupils' work is improving rapidly, often supported by regular use of the computer at home.

109. The main factor still lacking is the staff's confidence and expertise in the subject so that they can support pupils' learning to the maximum. A programme of skills training was planned for both teachers and support staff for before Christmas, however, these were cancelled by the trainer and have not yet taken place. Consequently, staff are not yet secure in their own skills. The school's good quality resources are not yet fully exploited to support pupils' learning, and the subject leader is not yet in a position to lead developments or to monitor standards effectively. A full audit of the school's resources to ensure that all computers are appropriately equipped for each class, and to identify gaps in provision, still needs to take place.

110. Limited evidence of ICT work other than word processing was available, but what was seen was of a satisfactory standard at Key Stage 1, but below expectations at Key Stage 2. The youngest pupils, in particular, make good progress during lessons in their knowledge, understanding and use of computers. They use a mouse and keyboard with confidence and, with varying degrees of support, can draft simple texts. These pupils have used special programmable equipment to give them the experience of control technology, and to build up their spatial awareness. Older pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 use ICT to draw bar charts, for example of the results of a class survey on the popularity of different foodstuffs, and are working on labelling and classifying information. They have used a *painting* program successfully to create pictures in the style of Kandinsky.

111. Display work shows that pupils in Years 3 and 4 have used a word processing package to write texts, and can change the size, colour and font of the script. They were taught how to open and save a *file* in November 2002. These, however, are skills expected of younger pupils. Pupils use the Internet to research information for projects in other subjects, such as music, and to present work such as the classification of instruments by sound. They have used a simple programming package to support their work on angles in mathematics, and use other mathematics skills ICT packages to support the subject.

112. The quality of the teaching observed varied, and was satisfactory overall. In one lesson observed in Key Stage 1, teaching was very good with both class teacher and teaching assistant working very effectively to promote pupils' learning – on this occasion to use a word processing package to write text. In another lesson at Key Stage 1, however, the assistant working with a small group was not well enough briefed and was not used to facilitating the pupils' use of ICT themselves. On this occasion, the pupils watched whilst their suggestions were keyed in by the adult which did not promote their ICT skills sufficiently. A lesson for the oldest pupils gave them satisfactory opportunity to develop work they had previously found on the Internet, but the planning was not fully implemented. Due to ongoing technical problems with some computers and other hardware, teachers are not always able to put their plans fully into practice. Pupils have positive attitudes to ICT and are keen to do well. They enjoy using the new computers, and as a result, behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils work well together and readily help one another when they get stuck.

113. This subject still has some way to go before pupils achieve as well as they could. Long term planning lacks detail and the curriculum is new to the school, unlike that for the other subjects which were previously consistently taught, although planned differently. Consequently, pupils' ICT skills have not been progressively developed, and a systematic record of their work is not kept. Assessment of pupils' skills is unsatisfactory. The school has developed a *skills ladder* for assessing pupils' attainment and progress over time, but this has not yet been implemented and staff have no formal way of tracking what pupils know, understand and can do. Lesson planning cannot, therefore, be based on this information and whilst clear, appropriate learning objectives are identified in lessons, they are not always adapted to meet pupils' different needs.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

114. Only a small number of lessons were observed during the period of the inspection. These included gymnastics and dance. No records are kept of pupils' developing skills as they move through the school. Standards observed in lessons are in line with national expectations for pupils aged seven and nine. This is similar to the situation found at the time of the previous inspection. However, younger pupils were observed working above levels expected for their age. Physical education is well supported by after-school clubs, such as football, short tennis and cricket.

115. By the age of seven, pupils have good co-ordination. They move freely around the hall and are fully aware of the space available to them, and of each other. They take some responsibility for the apparatus, for example putting mats out by themselves. In physical education, younger pupils can copy movements modelled by the teacher, such as jumps, and follow instructions to move forwards and backwards, or push and pull one another. They develop sequences of their own, such as three jumps and a roll. Pupils understand how activity affects their heart beat, and the importance of *warming up* and *cooling down* exercises at the beginning and end of lessons. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 extend this to link a range of jumps and balances into a controlled gymnastic sequence. They can set out apparatus safely, and use it to perform their sequence.

116. In dance, the younger pupils in Key Stage 1 move freely with expression, and show a good awareness of space. They move well to the beat of music, on this occasion a triple beat in preparation for waltzing at Cinderella's forthcoming ball, and work co-operatively together in pairs. Older pupils in Years 1 and 2 moved responsively to the music of *Peter and the Wolf*, varying their movements according to the animals depicted. Some worked on refining their movements so that they were improved by the end of the lesson. No dance was observed at Key Stage 2.

117. Lessons are based on national advice which covers a wide range of activities, skills, games and sports, although work is still to be done on tailoring these to the school's needs. Lessons are well planned which ensures that pupils are introduced to new skills in a carefully developed sequence. As a result, pupils of all abilities work at their own level to practice and improve their skills. Pupils enjoy the lessons and respond enthusiastically. Teaching was good at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2. The best teaching was observed with the youngest pupils, as the behaviour of the older pupils in Key Stage 1 was affected by some startling adverse weather – snow, thunder and hail – which occurred during their lesson. Teaching in Key Stage 2 was satisfactory as a few pupils were showing off which slowed the pace of the lesson whilst the teacher dealt with it.

118. Good features of teaching in all lessons included: the demonstrations by teachers to show pupils what they were to do; appropriate warm up and cool down exercises at the beginning and end of the lessons; cross curricular links – for example one teacher likened a sequence to a sentence with a beginning, middle and end, and another suggested to pupils that they moved like cats on "soft velvety paws." Other particularly effective elements were the use of pupils themselves to demonstrate actions for others to copy, and teachers' encouraging responses and praise which maintained pupils' concentration and interest at a high level. When teaching was less effective, it was because the pace of the lesson slowed, for various reasons, such taking a long time to put apparatus out or repeating aspects, which caused pupils to lose concentration.

119. The school hall is too small and restricts the scope of some lessons. However, outside facilities and other resources are good. The school plans to replace some older equipment which will add to the quality of apparatus available. Subject leadership is unsatisfactory. Priority has been given to other subject areas and work has not yet begun on developing physical education, or working systematically towards raising standards.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

120. Due to timetabling arrangements, only two lessons in religious education were observed, one with reception and Year 1 pupils, and the other for Years 3 and 4. Both were taken by the specialist teacher. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was satisfactory, but the standards attained by pupils can not be judged overall as there was insufficient evidence of past work, and no records are kept of pupils' developing skills, knowledge and understanding. Assemblies give satisfactory support to religious education and to pupils' personal development.

121. The younger pupils are building up their understanding of Jesus and his life, morals and the messages inherent in the Christian religion. Religious education is giving good support to pupils' personal development as they are encouraged to think about the emotions felt by characters in the stories, and to consider whether certain behaviour is right or wrong.

122. Older pupils are learning about the significance of water in the Christian ceremony of baptism. They have a good understanding of Christian traditions and the role of Godparents,

and that the baptism ceremony welcomes children into the family of God. Pupils use appropriate vocabulary about Christian services and church, such as *font*, however, few could describe the significance of water as a means of *washing the bad things away*, as indicated in the lesson plan.

123. The effective elements of the teaching observed included good relationships with the pupils. The teacher used these effectively to draw out and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding through careful questioning. The topics were well-related to the pupils' everyday lives, for example the younger pupils were asked to say how they would feel about certain playground behaviour such as bullying. The pupils were attentive and quiet throughout the lessons, even when their concentration waned, and they applied themselves well to the supporting tasks such as writing and drawing. In both lessons, expectations of the pupils were over-ambitious, and although they remained very well behaved, they lost interest at times. The youngest pupils were not able to determine the shared message in two Bible stories and the older pupils were expected to sit, listen and answer questions for too long. In both lessons, therefore, opportunities for learning were reduced.

124. Both lessons observed were from a series on the topic. Satisfactory planning shows the curriculum links directly to the locally agreed syllabus, as required. In practice, however, the lesson content was not sufficiently well matched to all the pupils' needs. The timetable analysis indicates insufficient time is spent on religious education at Key Stage 2.

125. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. The school has a range of books and artefacts to support teaching and learning about different religions but some of these need updating to remove stereotypic representations of religious characters. A member of the local community is an expert in multi-cultural and multi-faith education. The school is fortunate that she is generous with her time and resources, which enhances the resources available for the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY, HISTORY and MUSIC

126. No lessons were observed in these subjects. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements about the standards attained by the pupils overall as records are not kept of their developing skills, knowledge and understanding, and very little past work was available.

Pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding

127. The youngest pupils are gaining a firm understanding of different periods of time, and the differences between them. An effective wall display on World War 2 showed pupils in Years 3 and 4 are developing an understanding of the era. They are beginning to use real evidence for historical purposes, for example interviewing villagers who were evacuated during the war. A visit to a local RAF station enabled them to "experience" teaching styles of the 1930s and 1940s, and what flying was like during the war. These pupils' past written work, however, indicates little of what they know and understand, and does not match their work in other areas of the curriculum, such as English. Presentation is often unsatisfactory, and recording is overly-dependent on work sheets, where very short answers are required. Extended writing is sometimes uncompleted.

128. There was insufficient past work available in design and technology for any judgements to be made. No lessons were observed in music, and no evidence of pupils' work and skills was available. However, music is important to the school. On a visit to the school, skilled music-making with percussion instruments and singing was heard in a lesson in the hall. The Christmas performance, *the Nutcracker*, showed pupils were familiar with

music and song, and there is a strong take-up of music tuition, as well as a well-attended choir and recorder club.

Other aspects of design and technology, history and music

129. The curricula for history and design and technology have been based on national guidance since September 2002. These extensive schemes of work have not yet been tailored to suit the school, and modules are selected by the individual class teachers which does not provide a secure plan for the progressive development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Design and technology modules are chosen to fit in with other topics being covered by the class. For example a geography topic on plans and maps, including those of playgrounds, was supported by making model playgrounds. The history topics are somewhat dictated by arrangements made by the school cluster. For example, the headteacher would like pupils to study *The Egyptians*, but this topic is covered by the middle school to which most of the pupils transfer when they leave St.Peter's. Analysis of the time spent teaching subjects shows that insufficient time is spent on music at Key Stage 1 and on history at both Key Stages. The curriculum plans for music are extensive and well-thought through. They are provided by the music specialist teacher and, too, are based on the government guidelines, with the addition of resources and specified pieces of music and songs which fit in with the school's events, such as Christmas and Easter. A brief evaluation is made at the end of every lesson although these do not constitute a record of pupils' skills. However, they are helpful in informing further planning and for writing thorough end of year reports. These plans are given to class teachers at the end of every term, which prevents them having advance knowledge of what their pupils are going to do.

130. There are no systems for tracking pupils' developing skills in history and design and technology. A promising *skills ladder* has been created for this purpose in music, but has not yet been put into practice. Subject leadership in design and technology and history has not begun as priority has been given to other subjects of the curriculum. The specialist teacher is the sole music teacher at the moment.

131. Resources for design and technology are unsatisfactory. They are out of date and unexciting, and do not support the subject well. History resources are satisfactory. Boxes of resources have been made up to support most of the topics covered, and these are supplemented by a historical resource centre in Stafford. Parents, too, provide resources when asked, such as clothes belonging to pupils' grandparents so they can compare them with today's clothes. Music resources are satisfactory, but limited in tuned percussion and breadth of multi-cultural music.