

INSPECTION REPORT

**BLACKSHAW MOOR CHURCH OF ENGLAND
FIRST SCHOOL**

Leek

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124287

Headteacher: Mrs I Kirkpatrick

Reporting inspector: Mr C Smith
25211

Dates of inspection: 30th September – 2nd October 2002

Inspection number: 248582

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Buxton Road Blackshaw Moor Leek Staffordshire
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Fax number:	n/a
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Hill
Date of previous inspection:	October 1997

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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25211	Colin Smith	Registered inspector	Mathematics Science Design and technology Music	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Key issues for action
9952	Lillian Brock	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
23887	Peter Nettleship	Team inspector	English Religious education Art and design Physical education Educational inclusion	Leadership and management
17685	Linda Spooner	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Information and communication technology Geography History Special educational needs	Quality and range of opportunities for learning

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Blackshaw Moor Church of England First School is situated on the outskirts of Leek in Staffordshire and takes children from a small council estate near to the school and from outlying farms. There are 40 pupils between the ages of four and nine; 18 boys and 22 girls. Almost all of the pupils are white and all are English speaking. Five pupils (12 per cent) are entitled to free school meals, which is close to the national average. Ten children have special educational needs (25 per cent), mainly with regard to learning difficulty, but none have statements. Children spend up to two terms in an Early Year's class before moving into full time reception. They enter school with broadly average levels of attainment for their age but a small number of children begin school with speech and language difficulties. Most of the staff have changed since the last inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a successful school that provides a good standard of education for its pupils. Standards are high in English and mathematics and above average in a number of other subjects. Teaching is good and pupils benefit from the positive learning atmosphere. As a result, they enjoy school, behave well and have good attitudes to learning. Much of the school's success is attributable to the very good leadership provided by the headteacher. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are high in English and mathematics and above average in information and communication technology (ICT), religious education, art and design and music;
- Teaching is good, particularly the Year1/2 infant class;
- The headteacher's very good leadership, with good support from staff and governors, is a major driving force;
- The school provides a rich and interesting curriculum and pupils' personal development is very well catered for. This benefits all pupils but particularly those with special educational needs;
- Parents have a high regard for the school and home-school links are strong and effective;
- Pupils are very well cared for and their learning is carefully assessed.

What could be improved

- Not enough opportunities are provided for junior pupils to acquire the skills to learn through investigation and enquiry in both history and science;
- Some inconsistencies arise in pupils' learning because there are not enough opportunities to check their progress in the different subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection in October 1997 and the school is in a strong position to continue to move forward. The current headteacher has been in post for five years and has systematically developed almost every aspect of children's learning and the school's provision. In ICT, for example, standards were unsatisfactory when the school was last inspected; standards are now above the levels expected. Standards in several other subjects are also much higher than they were, particularly English and mathematics. This is largely because pupils' learning is now carefully assessed and the results are used to plan the next steps. Much more is known about the work of the school and planning for the future is now effective because it is firmly rooted in an analysis of the school's performance. Improvements in checking teaching and learning across the different subjects have been more difficult to achieve because there are only two full-time teachers to do this. Satisfactory progress has been made in the main subjects, such as English and mathematics, but there is more to do to adequately check pupils' work in the other subjects.

STANDARDS

Only very small numbers of pupils are present in each year group and this can make the interpretation of results unreliable. For example, if only one pupil misses achieving the level expected, results can look very different, as happened in reading in 2000. A clearer impression of standards emerges from the results obtained over successive years. Over the last few years, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been well above average. The progress made by individual pupils is very carefully tracked and precise learning goals are set to help them reach the next level. This enables the school to set challenging targets and intervene to support any pupils whose progress falters. This is why virtually all boys and girls reach the levels expected and many reach higher levels.

Reception age children achieve well, particularly in the infant class. By the end of the reception year, they reach the levels expected in their knowledge and understanding and in their mathematical and physical development. They exceed the levels expected in creative and personal and social development and in their language skills.

Pupils achieve very well in several subjects to reach above average standards in ICT, religious education, art and design and music, at the ages of seven and nine, when they transfer to Middle School. In design and technology and in physical education, they reach the standards expected. Pupils progress very quickly in the infant class because much attention is given to acquiring the skills to explore and learn for themselves. In the junior class, there are fewer opportunities for these skills to develop. As a result, pupils' skills of investigation and enquiry do not progress as quickly as their knowledge and understanding. In science and history, for example, although standards are satisfactory, junior pupils do not extend their investigation skills enough. In these subjects and aspects of others, more able pupils could achieve more, although in most of the other subjects they are doing as well as they should. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and this helps them to make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy learning, show enthusiasm and concentrate well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils act sensibly and maturely. They look after and help each other. The school is vibrant and yet peaceful.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Strong relationships exist between all members of the school community. Pupils readily accept responsibility and show initiative, although opportunities to do this are more limited in the junior class.
Attendance	Above average. Pupils are keen to attend and are punctual.

Pupils show a strong sense of pride and care for their school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Very 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 is good overall. During the inspection, almost half of the lessons were good, a third satisfactory and the rest very good or excellent. Children not yet five years of age are taught each morning in the Early Years' class. Teaching here is satisfactory and there are good features in the teaching of reading and writing skills. The classroom is not as vibrant as the infant classroom, particularly in the quality of items displayed to arouse children's curiosity. Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils are taught together. In this class, the teaching is often very good and occasionally excellent. Teaching of Year 3 and 4 pupils in the junior class is satisfactory with good features. In both classes, teachers explain new learning

clearly and use questioning well to probe pupils' understanding. They expect pupils to think hard and work at a good pace. Pupils' knowledge and understanding develops well and enables them to reach good standards. The great strength of teaching in the infant class is the flexibility of methods and the encouragement pupils are given to find out for themselves. Not a minute is wasted and pupils show a real appetite for learning. In the junior class, the teaching methods are satisfactory but narrower. Pupils' factual knowledge and understanding is built up successfully, often to high levels, as in science. However, pupils' learning is more tightly channelled and pupils are not given the same encouragement to follow their own lines of enquiry, which restricts the development of their study skills. On the whole, the teaching of English and mathematics is good, although stronger in the infant class. In particular, the skills of literacy and numeracy are taught thoroughly. It is the opportunities to use these skills in learning in other subjects that marks the difference between the two classes. In reading and mathematics, the work given to pupils is carefully matched to their different learning needs, although this is less evident in science in the junior class. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well, in class and group settings, and very well devised learning programs are provided to help enable them to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Pupils benefit from a well planned and stimulating curriculum. Literacy and numeracy skills are the priority and pupils' learning is enriched by many additional activities. However, not enough opportunities are provided for junior pupils to learn for themselves.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Their needs are quickly identified and carefully tailored programs are provided, along with good levels of support, to help them learn.
Provision for pupils' personal (including spiritual, moral, social and cultural) development	Very good. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is very effectively provided for through school assemblies and music, art and design and geography lessons. Their moral awareness is very well catered for through opportunities to discuss right and wrong.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school is very caring and pupils' personal development and their academic learning is carefully assessed and information is used well to set improvement targets.

Racial equality is strongly promoted and pupils are very effectively taught the values of tolerance and respect. The partnership between home and school is good and parents have good opportunities to become involved with their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has vision and ambition for the school and has the energy and determination to achieve her goals. She has been a driving factor in the school's good improvements. Her team building skills have enabled other members of staff to be centrally involved.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have shown determination to raise their profile and contribution since the last inspection. They are now regular visitors. They know the school well and are fully involved in future planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Results are studied in detail and accurately analysed to identify and remedy any weaknesses. The headteacher and junior teacher observe each other's lessons occasionally and this is useful but there are not enough opportunities for them to examine and check pupils' learning in all subjects.

The strategic use of resources	Good. School results and how these compare to national standards, along with the views of pupils and parents, are all taken into account in an endeavour to seek best value and use resources wisely.
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Staffing levels are good and support staff make a valuable contribution to pupils' achievements and to the life of the school. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school, are well behaved and make good progress; • Parents find the staff helpful and easy to talk to and are pleased with information about their children's progress; • Parents appreciate the leadership of the school and the teaching; • The school is successful in helping children to act responsibly and to care for others; • Parents appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities and the amount of homework provided. 	

Parents' views of the school are extremely positive. The school is very popular and highly regarded by all parents. The inspection team endorses parents' positive views and believes that parents are right to be proud of their school. However, one or two parents who live some distance from the school commented that they did not find it easy to call in to discuss their children's learning or to find out what their children are expected to learn in the forthcoming term or year. These parents would prefer another parents' evening to be included in the school year. The inspection team agrees that this would be advantageous.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards are much higher now than they were a few years ago in several subjects, including English and mathematics. Teaching has improved since then and there has been a much greater focus on raising standards by making better use of assessments of children's learning to identify what needs to be taught next.
2. Although there are often very small numbers of pupils in each year group, standards can be determined by looking at attainments of successive groups. The picture is one of trends rising more quickly than they have nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Higher standards in many subjects have been reached and maintained since the current headteacher was appointed. To ensure that this upward pattern continues, teachers set precise learning targets for individual pupils to show them what they need to do to reach higher levels. Close attention is paid to pupils' individual progress. Plans are put into place to remedy any slippage. These measures have proved very successful in ensuring that pupils achieve well to reach well above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the age of seven. Standards in these subjects are well above those of similar schools. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 4, when they move on to Middle School, they achieve high standards in reading and mathematics and above average standards in writing.
3. Children make good progress in reception, particularly in the infant class. In the Early Years class, they make a positive start learning literacy and numeracy skills, such as letter sounds and counting. The new outdoor play area does much to promote children's physical and social skills. However, children's natural curiosity is fostered more successfully in the infant classroom, with its colourful and interesting displays. By the end of the reception year, children reach the levels expected in their knowledge and understanding of the world, in mathematics and in their physical development and exceed them in their personal development, their language and communication skills and in their creative development.
4. Pupils achieve well in English. They achieve particularly well in speaking and listening and respond well to encouragement to express their ideas. As a result, pupils are attentive listeners who know exactly what they are expected to learn. Reading skills are taught very effectively from the moment children enter school. By the age of seven, almost all pupils become fluent readers and by the age of nine, they read with enjoyment and good understanding. Parents play an important part in this process by ensuring regular daily reading practice for their children. A number of measures have been implemented to improve pupils' writing, such as inviting authors to inspire pupils to write creatively. Pupils spell and punctuate their work correctly and present their work in a neat and legible handwriting style. The content of their writing and their powers of expression are improving, although they are not at the level of their speaking and reading skills. This is partly because junior pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to write accounts of what they have found out for themselves or check their work to improve upon the original by redrafting.
5. Pupils also achieve well in mathematics. Their progress is very good in the infant class. Not only do they become quick and accurate with mental calculations, they benefit from good opportunities to tackle mathematical problems in written form. This deepens their understanding and prepares them well to answer questions on written tests later. Pupils make steady progress in mathematics in the junior class. Their skills and understanding of how to calculate and handle shapes and data

improve at a good rate. However, they have comparatively fewer opportunities than in the infant class to apply their skills to solve mathematical problems and their learning in this area is not as advanced.

6. Pupils achieve steadily in science. Standards are broadly at the levels expected and have changed little since the last inspection. In the infant class, pupils achieve particularly well in predicting what is likely to happen when a scientific test is undertaken and observing to see if they are right. They draw sensible conclusions. Their knowledge and understanding grows steadily. However, not enough opportunities are provided for more able pupils to tackle the more demanding areas of learning, such as how creatures adapt to their environment. Consequently, very few Year 2 pupils reach the higher levels. In the junior class, much is expected of pupils' capacity to handle advanced ideas, such as how oxygen in the blood nourishes the cells of the muscles. This moves their knowledge and understanding on to above average levels. However, their progress in understanding how to plan and carry out their own scientific tests does not progress at the same rapid rate. This is because the teacher structures their learning too tightly and does not give them enough encouragement to pursue their own lines of inquiry.
7. Pupils continue to achieve well in religious education and reach standards higher than those expected, as they did at the time of the last inspection. This is largely attributable to the headteacher's commitment to the subject, the quality of teaching and the central place religious education has within the school. Pupils now achieve well in ICT. This is a complete turnaround since the last inspection when standards were regarded as too low. Many improvements have been forthcoming. Better computer software and hardware, extensive staff training, a determination to include ICT in the learning of other subjects and the appointment of a visiting ICT specialist teacher, have raised standards to a level above those expected at the ages of seven and nine.
8. Pupils achieve steadily to reach the standards expected in design and technology, physical education and history and geography. However, in history there is scope to improve the rate at which pupils acquire the skills to investigate and find out for themselves. Pupils achieve well in art and design and in music. Standards in these subjects are higher than at the time of the last inspection and are above the levels expected by the end of Year 2 and 4. Improvements in music are directly attributable to the employment of an excellent visiting music teacher, whereas improvements in art and design spring from the headteacher's endeavours to encourage originality and creativity.
9. Pupils with special educational needs now make good progress. Small class sizes help. In addition, their learning needs are accurately assessed and good quality learning programmes are provided to enable them to achieve the targets specified. As a result, they play a full part in the life of the school and almost all reach the levels expected by the age of seven. Able and gifted pupils make good progress in most aspects of English and mathematics. Their needs are often well catered for by allowing them to work with older pupils in the same class. As a result, many reach high levels when their learning is assessed. However, there is scope to improve the learning of more able pupils in science, history and geography in the junior class by opening up opportunities for them to explore and learn for themselves.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are good. Strong relationships permeate the school and pupils' personal development is good. All these good features have been maintained since the last inspection. The school serves children well and gives pupils a clear vision of what they can achieve. Because of this, pupils are attentive in

lessons and most settle down quickly and calmly to their tasks. They display good levels of concentration and show a sense of pride in their completed work. Pupils enjoy the variety of activities and find lessons interesting. For example, children in the reception class were enthralled as they investigated objects and materials in the natural world. They used all their senses to compare and contrast the feel of different surfaces and were proud to show their finished patterns to each other. Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to learning and behave well because of the good support from staff.

11. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Parents confirm this and feel that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. The very rare instances of poor behaviour are dealt with quickly; pupils know what is expected of them; most conform well to the school's high expectations of behaviour. In an assembly for older pupils, for example, their good behaviour contributed well to the calm, orderly and respectful atmosphere. They responded well to the opportunity for quiet reflection during the assembly. Behaviour in the dining hall and in the playground is good. There is a friendly, sociable atmosphere at lunchtime as pupils dine at their 'family' tables. In the attractively set out playground, play is lively and happy and there is no evidence of unkind behaviour or harassment.
12. Pupils have good relationships with each other and with adults. There is a great deal of mutual respect within a calm, relaxed atmosphere. Due to the small size of the school, teachers know pupils very well. Although the inspection took place at the beginning of a new school year, teachers had already established good relationships with their pupils. This was evident in lessons and around the school. In discussion, pupils said, 'Teachers are friendly and understanding'. Older pupils look after younger pupils. This is seen in the dining hall and in the playground where relationships are harmonious. Pupils new to the school are welcomed and respected by members of the class groups. There have been no exclusions in the year prior to the inspection.
13. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils work well together during the many good opportunities they have to work in small groups. In reception and in the infant class pupils are encouraged to explore and find out for themselves. Pupils relish these opportunities and approach their work with creativity and originality. However, there are less opportunities for junior pupils to research and organise their own information and ideas. Consequently, this aspect of their personal development does not progress to the same degree. Pupils take responsibility for school and classroom tasks and carry them out sensibly. For example, two Year 4 pupils prepare the hall for morning assembly. Pupils work conscientiously towards their personal and academic targets. This helps to give them an understanding of how well they are learning. Pupils show respect for each other and maturity in the way they understand the feelings of others. This is attributable to the many good opportunities they have to discuss personal and social topics. Attendance is good and above the national average. Pupils enjoy school. They arrive on time, eager for the first lesson.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. Teaching is good overall and often very good in the infant class. Two-thirds of the lessons observed were good or better. Some of the teaching of religious education and music was excellent. This is a significant improvement on the quality of teaching at the time of the last inspection, which was satisfactory.
15. Teachers manage pupils' learning and behaviour successfully. This is based on good relationships and mutual respect. As a result, lessons are calm and purposeful, pupils listen attentively, work with good concentration and give of their

best. Teachers expect pupils to behave well and to persevere when tasks are difficult. Pupils respond positively to these high expectations. This is reflected in the careful presentation of their work.

16. Teaching of children in the reception year is good overall. In the Early Years classroom, good relationships are established and children quickly settle into new routines. Effective teaching of language skills enables children to make a good start in learning to read and write. However, there is scope to make the classroom more attractive and interesting to stimulate children's curiosity and encourage them to explore and learn. Over the space of the year, most of their time is spent in the infant class where the teaching is good and often very good. Skills of recognising and blending letters and counting and adding numbers are taught very well and children are encouraged to use these skills to investigate and find out for themselves. Originality and creativity are highly prized and this is reflected in the work that children produce.
17. Overall, English and mathematics are taught well. In particular, the skills of reading, writing and handling numbers are effectively taught throughout the school. In the infant class, the teacher places a strong emphasis on learning letter sounds and recognising words. This good teaching is strengthened by conscientious and regular support from parents in giving their children extended practice at home. These factors lead to high standards in reading. In mathematics, pupils benefit from good teaching of operations such as adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing. As a result, they develop confidence in quick and accurate mental calculation. In the infant class, pupils receive very good guidance on how to apply their number skills to solve mathematical problems. For example, they were asked to reason out how they could measure the stem of a sunflower with a ninety-degree bend in the middle. One pupil commented, 'First measure the straight part and then add it to the bent part'. This illustrates how successfully pupils' thinking skills are extended. In the junior class, opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills are not as plentiful.
18. Teachers have good expertise in several subjects, particularly in English, religious education, art and design, ICT and music. They have at least sound understanding of the other subjects. As a result, teachers explain new ideas clearly and make effective use of teaching aids, such as photographs, models and real objects. In a religious education lesson, for example, the teacher produced a strange ball that looked like a mass of elastic bands. The pupils were intensely curious and wanted to know more. They were fascinated to learn that it was a product made from the sap of a tree in Africa. These approaches are common and invariably attract pupils' interest and attention. Teachers also check pupils' learning carefully. They ask searching questions to probe their understanding and to make them think. This is a particularly strong feature of the teaching in the infant class where teachers very seldom directly tell pupils the facts but rather lead them to discover new ideas for themselves. In the junior class, learning moves along at quick pace and the content of the lesson often presents a high level of challenge to the pupils. However, the teaching methods used are not as flexible as in the infant class. In subjects such as science and history, for example, pupils do not have enough opportunities to find out for themselves. Therefore, their learning of knowledge and facts develops more quickly than the rate at which they acquire new skills.
19. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Small classes help and pupils receive a lot of individual attention from teachers and well trained classroom assistants. In addition, teachers seek to involve pupils by asking them specific questions and praising their efforts to answer. For example, in an infant mathematics lesson, the teacher worked hard to involve the pupils with special educational needs in the class discussion. As a result, they impressed their classmates by making several important observations. Although the pace of learning

in lessons is often quick, pupils who find learning difficult are well supported. This enables them to make good progress and achieve standards expected.

20. Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations. The content of the lesson often makes considerable demands on pupils' reasoning skills. Lessons also move along at a quick pace. In music for example, lessons are action packed and pupils are introduced to several different skills and ideas in one lesson. In the infant class the work provided is very carefully matched to pupils with different learning needs. For example, in a design and technology lesson, the teacher did not assume that all pupils would know how to use scissors correctly. She identified those who needed help and provided step-by-step instruction. Adult help is plentiful and this ensures that pupils of all levels of attainment are well supported, which moves their learning on. In the junior class, there is less adult support. The work provided in some subjects, such as mathematics and ICT, is carefully tailored to meet pupils' individual learning needs. However, there is scope to improve the match in both English and science.

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

21. The curriculum is good, although it is richer and more exciting for pupils in the infant class than in the junior class. There have been good improvements since the last inspection because the planning of future lessons is now much more closely linked to the successes or difficulties pupils have encountered previously. Significant improvements have been made in the provision for ICT, which was formerly identified as having significant weaknesses. The improvements are attributable to specialist teaching, more computers and many good opportunities for pupils to extend their ICT skills in other subjects. These factors have resulted in a significant improvement in standards across the school. Teachers work very constructively with the local 'cluster' of schools in sharing planning and subject expertise. This has a positive impact on the consistency and quality of lessons and ultimately on the good standards being attained in many subject areas.
22. The quality and range of the curriculum for children in the pre-reception and reception years is good. Many rich and stimulating activities are provided to enable children to succeed in each area of learning. Learning activities are carefully planned to ensure that they match the children's different stages of development. The skills of learning to read and write and handle numbers are taught well and there are many good opportunities for children to improve their spoken language. The quality of provision for reception children in the infant class is particularly rich and has a significant impact on their ability to think and explain their ideas.
23. In Years 1 to 4, sufficient time is allocated to each subject and pupils' learning is enriched by many additional activities. Effective strategies for teaching both literacy and numeracy are firmly in place and planning of future lessons is regularly adjusted to cater for pupils' different learning needs. Pupils are provided with suitable opportunities to use and extend their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. There are some weaknesses, however, in science and history in the junior class. Although pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding in these subjects, there are not enough opportunities for them to discover and learn for themselves. As a result, pupils' enquiry skills, such as finding and sifting information from books and observations, do not increase as quickly as their knowledge.
24. Good provision is made for pupils who have special educational needs. They benefit from good levels of support and carefully targeted education plans to help them improve. As a result, almost all of these pupils reach the levels expected before they move on to Middle School. The revised Code of Practice has been fully implemented

apart from the need to communicate, in its policy, the school's written commitment to partnership with parents and pupils. Overall, satisfactory provision is made for higher ability pupils, although more could be done to extend their investigation and enquiry skills in the junior class.

25. The provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. Pupils have opportunities to take part in such activities as the 'Countryside Club' and ICT clubs. Their learning is enriched through very good links with parents and the local and business community. These include visits to a local garage; attendance at church to celebrate festivals; grandparents' lunch days; and, visits to newspaper offices.
26. A strength of the school is the emphasis placed on the pupils' personal as well as academic development. The school is fully committed to the inclusion of all pupils in all activities. This is evident in the way pupils are tracked and supported when extra help is needed. Teachers have not yet written down an agreed plan to show how they intend to raise pupils' awareness of personal, social and health matters. However, many good opportunities are taken, through assemblies and class discussions, to bring important matters, such as sex education and drugs awareness to pupils' attention. Pupils are well prepared for transfer to Middle School.
27. The overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and the school has maintained the high standards reported at the last inspection. Provision for spiritual development is very strong. Displays of work, photographs and posters around the school define the high value placed upon pupils' work and the school's achievements. Assemblies provide a special time of day for pupils to learn about themselves and others, and to reflect on their feelings and beliefs. During lessons, pupils are given good opportunities to reflect and think about how their actions might affect others. In a religious education lesson, for example, pupils were given time to experience the stillness and silence of nature in God's world.
28. Provision for moral development is very good. It is firmly rooted in the school beliefs and practices. There is only one school rule, that 'No one shall hurt anyone else.' Adults provide very good role models and provide pupils with a strong sense of what is right and wrong. The school's positive approach to valuing everyone is evident in the way that pupils' personal and academic strengths are kept in mind when planning for their learning needs. Pupils are given time in assemblies and in class discussions to share their ideas. Relationships are good. Pupils are respectful and mindful of the feelings of others. In religious education, science, history and geography, pupils consider some of the moral as well as the social issues related to the local environment and to the wider world. For example, in science, they learn about plants and small creatures and also how to take care of them. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to contribute to the needs of others through collections for charities.
29. Provision for social development is good. The school fosters the skills of co-operation in many aspects of its day-to-day life. This is seen daily in the dining room where lunchtime has a genuine 'family' feel and where older pupils cheerfully take responsibility for looking after the younger children. In lessons, pupils are often asked to work in pairs or groups where they share ideas and collaborate well in activities.
30. Provision for cultural development is very good. Studies of the local area, particularly in geography and history, help to develop the pupils' sense of belonging, why things happened as they did and the factors that influence the community and its environment. There are many good opportunities for pupils to raise their awareness of faiths and cultural traditions, other than their own. This is particularly so in

religious education but also in other subjects and through the range of books displayed around the school. Visitors from local churches, visits to different places of worship and in-depth studies of different faiths provide pupils with very good opportunities to understand the wider world and prepare them very well for life in culturally diverse society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. The school's procedures for caring for its pupils are good and have been well maintained since the last inspection. There are good relationships in the school because teachers and other adults take their responsibilities seriously and show considerable care and concern for the pupils.
32. Everyone connected with the school is firmly committed to creating a climate for good behaviour where pupils feel safe and valued. There are good procedures for promoting positive behaviour, firmly based on rewards and encouragement for pupils to behave well. This was seen in the good management of pupils in almost all lessons. The reward system appeals to pupils and they value the rewards offered. Sanctions are carefully thought through and purposefully applied on the rare occasions when needed. Staff discuss any incidents of misbehaviour with the pupils so that they understand the impact of their actions on others.
33. Procedures for promoting and monitoring attendance are good. Unexplained absences are followed up diligently. Records show that some of the authorised absence is due to parents taking children on holiday in term time. Registers are kept in good order. Most pupils arrive at school on time ensuring that registration periods are efficient and lessons get off to a prompt start.
34. There has been an improvement in child protection procedures since the last inspection. The designated teacher has received up to date training for her role and she has ensured that all members of staff have been trained by an external agency. Personal safety is a feature of personal and social education and the Life Caravan visits school to enhance pupils' awareness of healthy living. Although there is no whole school documented programme for pupils' personal, social and health education, pupils are frequently encouraged to discuss important topics. Their awareness of sex and family values and the danger of drugs are well provided for. Difficulties in relationships or problems can be discussed in religious education, geography and history. All adults in the school work tirelessly to support and care for any upset children.
35. Procedures for the health and safety of all who work in the school are good. The designated teacher and a nominated governor have received training to fulfil their role. Risk assessments are regularly conducted and documented and the caretaker and staff are vigilant on a daily basis. There is regular maintenance of equipment and buildings and fire drills are held regularly. Although there is no fully qualified first aider, all staff have received training in emergency first aid procedures. Staff are well aware of the medical needs of all pupils.
36. Monitoring of pupils' personal development is good. Pupils' progress books have been introduced following consultation with parents. Parents receive half-termly reports on their children's attitudes to school. There is a strong work ethic in the school and staff provide good role models. Pupils' are keen to improve their own standards and are involved in setting their own targets for improvement.
37. At the time of the last inspection, the information that was gathered from assessing pupils' progress was not used sufficiently to plan the next learning steps. This was a key issue to improve. The school now has very good assessment procedures in

place for English, mathematics and ICT. Teachers track each pupil's progress and in English and mathematics use this information to set very precise targets to show each pupil what they need to do to improve. Procedures for assessing and recording progress in other subjects is better than is seen in most schools. Almost all lessons are evaluated and within these evaluations, teachers record how well individuals or groups of pupils are doing. In addition, teachers keep individual assessment files. These are regularly and accurately completed and contain information from standardised tests and half-termly assessments in English, mathematics and science. This ensures that teachers know exactly where pupils are.

38. Assessment information from tests and lesson evaluations is now used very effectively to provide teachers with information on the next steps in learning and is consistently integrated into the planning of the main subjects. This has a positive impact on standards as teachers have a thorough knowledge of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. A relative weakness is in the use of assessment in science in the junior class. Although pupils' scientific knowledge is carefully monitored through the assessment of samples of work, this is not as yet influencing teaching and learning enough in the development of research and investigation skills.
39. The school has established a tracking system to check the long-term progress of individual pupils and year groups. This information is used effectively to identify strengths and weaknesses in performance and to calculate the value being added by the school in the provision it makes for its pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. The school has continued to maintain the good relationship with parents reported at the time of the last inspection. Parents view the school as a very good one, which their children enjoy attending. There was a very good response to the questionnaire, which reflects parents' interest in their children's education. Parents were unanimous in their view that their children like school. All parents who replied to the questionnaire were in total agreement that the school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. They also consider that teaching is good and that children's behaviour is good. The inspection findings confirm parents' positive views. Parents are regularly consulted on school matters through periodic questionnaires. As a result, governors and staff have good understanding of what parents think and how they feel.
41. The impact of parental involvement on the work of the school and the effectiveness of the school's links with parents are good. Some parents help in the classroom and when pupils go on visits out of school. This help is invaluable in increasing opportunities for pupils to talk about their learning. The Parent, Teacher and Friends Association (PTFA) has raised valuable funds and parents are involved in improvement projects. The new play area for reception children is a good example of parents and the school working together. Teachers encourage parents to call in and discuss their children's progress. Many parents who live near the school make full use of the opportunity but this is more difficult for parents who live in outlying districts. These parents do not always feel fully involved in the life of the school and the headteacher has attempted to overcome this by setting up an email link.
42. Information for parents is satisfactory overall. The school offers one formal consultation evening each year in the spring term and an open afternoon. These occasions are well supported by parents. Parents can also check on their children's progress through the half-termly written reports they receive. Pupils' annual reports to parents are written in a clear readable style and targets for future development are woven into the comments on progress in subjects. The personal and social comments show that teachers know pupils well. The prospectus is informative but

the annual report of the governing body has one or two important items missing, such as facilities for the disabled. Parents at the meeting prior to the inspection were right to ask for more written information on what is being taught.

43. The school reaches out to parents by welcoming them to attend the mother and toddler group held on one afternoon each week. With the support of Leek College, computer classes for adults are offered in the school. Parents confirm that there are good induction procedures before their children start school. The school recognises the value of the work that parents do to support their children with work at home. Every effort is made to establish links with parents of children who have a special educational need. Parents are very happy with what the school is trying to achieve.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. There have been significant improvements in many aspects of leadership and management since the last inspection. Much of this centres around the headteacher and her influence on the school. As a result of her clear vision and determination to raise standards, there is a very strong commitment to improvement that drives the governors and the staff as well as the children.
45. The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and key staff are very good. The headteacher is a natural communicator, leading the school with enthusiasm and being keen to involve the governors, staff and parents in the decision making. Her strength is in managing change. She is the driving force behind the school's positive ethos. This is seen in the close, 'family' atmosphere that is a feature of the school. It is also a key factor in the improved quality of provision in many areas of the curriculum. Her commitment to the highest standards of behaviour is reflected in the attitudes that the pupils have towards each other and towards their work. Parents greatly appreciate the headteacher's contribution and the way that her deeply held values permeate the day-to-day life and work of the school. She also contributes strongly to the work of the local cluster of schools. This helps to broaden the horizons of staff and pupils, as well as the governors and parents. For example, she played a major role in developing 'Business / School Partnership' links in the local area that enriched the education of the pupils, as well as providing additional funding in all the schools involved in the scheme.
46. Responsibility for the leadership and management of subjects is shared between the teachers in the school. Each teacher has to accept a much wider range of responsibilities than teachers in most schools do. To make their leadership roles manageable, there is close cooperation between the subject leaders in the three cluster schools. The school also now employs two part-time specialist teachers for music and ICT to extend its expertise. However, there is still more to do to ensure that teaching and learning and standards across all subjects are carefully checked. Literacy, numeracy and ICT lessons are observed and pupils' assessment results in English, mathematics and science are carefully analysed. This is an improvement that helps to identify where changes are needed. However, not enough time is given to checking teaching and pupils' work in some other subjects. Consequently, there are differences in the way that pupils are taught in the infants and junior classes. In subjects such as history and science, good practice is not noted and shared sufficiently.
47. The governing body is effective in fulfilling its statutory duties. Its strength now lies in the responsibilities accepted by the various committees in overseeing the running of the school and in planning for the future. This involvement has enabled governors to gain a clear view of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school. Subsequent decisions on employing specialist part-time staff, on identifying the needs of the nursery and reception aged children and on the need for building

improvements have proved to be very beneficial. Governors now have a much better grasp of standards and of teaching and learning throughout the school than at the time of the last inspection.

48. With such a high proportion of time dedicated to class teaching, the headteacher is extremely stretched to maintain her increasingly demanding responsibilities. Despite the many constraints, she manages to monitor the teaching in the key subjects. As well as observing the teachers, she successfully oversees the work of the nursery nurse with the youngest children in the school. The school is regularly selected for its potential to train new teachers. The headteacher provides very good mentoring to graduate students as they undertake their one-year placements at the school.
49. Very good routines have been established to enable financial and administrative duties to be efficiently maintained. The office administrator provides very good support by lightening the workload on the headteacher and staff. Very good use is made of new technology to store and analyse data on finances, monthly returns and pupil records. This enables the staff to monitor spending, to evaluate the progress of each child at regular intervals and to note areas of strength and weakness within the school's provision. Grants are creatively used, with improvements being made in ICT and in imaginative developments to the school buildings. The ten per cent budget surplus is already earmarked for building and resource improvements. In addition, governors use the local information about rising and falling birth rates in the area to prepare for, and maintain, good level of staffing and resources, irrespective of higher or lower pupil numbers. Consequently, the surplus is projected to decrease by five per cent this year.
50. In the five years since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in the areas identified as key issues for action and in the provision of resources. More time has been made available for monitoring teaching and this needs to be continued. The school development plan is now drawn up corporately. School results are compared to the national picture and parents, pupils and the local education authority are consulted in the drive to secure the best possible value in decision making. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning and the standards achieved are significantly higher and the school's good reputation continues to grow.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. The headteacher, governors and staff should now:

- a) Ensure that more opportunities are provided for junior pupils to acquire the skills to learn through investigation and enquiry in both history and in science by;
- planning opportunities for all pupils and particularly the more able ones, to plan and carry out their own investigations and enquiries;
 - teaching pupils to make more effective use of reference materials to find out more for themselves;
 - teaching pupils to improve the quality of their written accounts, when recording their findings.

(paragraphs 4, 9, 13, 18, 20, 23, 24, 38, 65, 68, 69, 77, 78, 91, 93 and 94)

- b) Remedy the inconsistencies in pupils' learning by;
- increasing the opportunities for subject leaders to check pupils' learning in lessons and the work they produce in their books and folders.

(paragraphs 46, 71, 75, 83, 90 and 103)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

21

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

26

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	3	9	7	0	0	0
Percentage	10	14	43	33	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 approximately five 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)		43
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		10

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	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	3	4	7

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total			
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School			
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total			
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School			
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
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
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 of pupils on roll
35
0
0
1
0
0
1
0
0
0
0
0
0
0
0
0

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

No ethnic group recorded

0

0

0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7
Average class size	13.3

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	2.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	38

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0.1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0.2

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
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	£
Total income	148,000
Total expenditure	155,686
Expenditure per pupil	3,992
Balance brought forward from previous year	22,730
Balance carried forward to next year	15,044

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	43
Number of questionnaires returned	34

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	29	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68	32	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	62	38	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	41	0	0	9
The teaching is good.	76	24	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	32	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	32	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	24	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	65	32	3	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	79	18	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	79	21	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	32	6	3	6

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

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

52. Provision within the Foundation Stage of children's learning is good and has improved since the last inspection. A good quality outdoor learning and play area has been built and this has significantly enhanced the opportunities for children to learn about the environment and further develop their physical, creative and social skills. Good opportunities are in place for parents to be actively and regularly involved in their children's learning through helping them develop reading skills. A very good feature is the quality of the home / school reading diaries. These provide a very useful dialogue between school and home.
53. At the time of the inspection there were three children in the pre-reception group, attending on a part-time basis and five children in the first term of the reception year. This last group spend mornings in the Early Years classroom with the nursery nurse and afternoons in Class 1 with the infants. Children are admitted to the pre-reception class at three stages during the year and to Class 1 in either September or January, depending on when they become five. The system works well as children are provided with good opportunities to belong to a smaller group and are gradually introduced to being part of a larger class.
54. Children achieve well during their time in reception. Their overall attainment on entry to school is broadly typical of their age, although a wide range of ability is represented. Assessment information and children's learning in lessons, indicates that all children are on course to reach the levels expected, known as the early learning goals, in their mathematical and physical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. However, by the end of the reception year most pupils are likely to exceed the levels expected in their personal development, their language and communication skills and in their creative development.
55. Teaching is good overall, with particular strengths in the establishment of relationships, the high expectations of children's behaviour and the teaching of language and number skills. Children are very well cared for and the provision for children with special educational needs is good. Opportunities for children's creative and imaginative development are particularly good in the mixed infant class but this is not as strong in the Early Years class where classroom displays and role play areas are not as exciting and vibrant. The assessment of children's learning is rigorous and teachers and support staff have a very clear knowledge of what each child has achieved. Information gained from assessing their learning is used well to make decisions about the next steps to take.

Personal, social and emotional development

56. Teaching in this area of learning is very good and children achieve very well. As a result, they come into school happily. Routines are clear and this leads to a contented and well ordered class atmosphere where children's behaviour is good and positive relationships flourish. Teachers and classroom assistants employ exactly the right blend of giving children time to think and make decisions and then question them to check on their reasoning and move their learning on. As a result, children are confident to make choices about which activity they would like to do. They also respond positively when taught together, having learned to listen and wait until it is their turn to speak.

57. A wide range of well planned activities provide good opportunities for children to learn to work independently. As a result, they develop good concentration, often without the need for adult support. All children develop an awareness of the need to follow rules and take account of the needs of others. Relationships and behaviour are good.

Communication, language and literacy

58. By the end of the reception year, almost all children achieve the expected goals in this area and most are on course to exceed these levels. Teaching is good, particularly of the skills of reading and early writing. Children in both age groups have learned to listen attentively. Occasionally, in the Early Years class, children are expected to listen to adults too much and do not have enough opportunities to express their own ideas. A majority of children are developing increasingly complex language skills to describe what they see and understand. A good example of this was observed in a puppet making activity where the children were quite confident to explain what they wanted to make and what their designs were going to look like. For example, one child explained, 'I want to use the furry material to look like a Billy Goat's face.'
59. Reading skills develop well because they are taught effectively through a carefully thought out learning programme. Children are actively encouraged to learn about books and to listen and respond to stories as soon as they start in pre-reception. Good assessment procedures ensure that each child is introduced to the books in the school's reading scheme as soon as they are ready. Letter sounds and literacy skills are taught well every day and, as a result, most children already recognise a number of letters and know the sounds they make. Children achieve well in writing. Almost all children write their first names legibly and correctly. Written work in their books indicates that by the end of the reception year almost all children write words and phrases without adult help. More able children write expressively; for example, one child's story began with 'The wood was gloomy.'

Mathematical development

60. Most of the children are on course to attain the expected learning goals. Teaching in this area is satisfactory. The skills of counting and adding are taught well. In addition, children are provided with interesting practical activities. In the Early Year's class, for example, a game was devised to help children to learn about the properties of different shapes. By the end of the session, the children were able to identify simple shapes by how many sides or 'corners' each had.
61. Work in books indicates that most of the children are working reliably with numbers to 5 but work from the previous year indicates that by the end of reception, the majority of children are confident with numbers to 10 with more able children tackling numbers to 20.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

62. Teaching in this area of learning is satisfactory overall but good in the infant class where the activities provided are stimulating and highly interesting. In the one lesson observed, children knew exactly what they were trying to achieve and could explain why they had chosen certain materials and how they intended to use them. Good opportunities were taken to develop children's use of language, for example, when the teacher and children discussed why glue has to be applied quickly, before it dries. In their investigations into the topic about skin, the children observed and felt different textures and discussed whether they were 'smooth, rough or hard'. Children's powers of observation are developed well. For example, they were

encouraged to use magnifying glasses to examine snails. The classroom assistant skilfully directed their attention to tiny details by saying, 'Look closely at the feelers – what can you see at the end?' The Early Years classroom is well organised but not as richly displayed with tempting objects and interesting pictures to stir the children's curiosity.

Physical development

63. Most children are likely to achieve the expected learning goals in this area, including manipulative skills, such as handwriting and the use of scissors. Teaching is good. Basic skills are taught methodically, such as the correct way to use a pencil or crayons. In the Early Years classroom, children are closely observed as they take part in activities such as riding wheeled toys or climbing on the outdoor apparatus. Children in both classes have access to the school hall for a range of physical activity lessons. In class and when moving around the school the children take good care of their own and others' safety.

Creative development

64. Much of this aspect of learning is taught in the infant class. Teaching in this area is often very effective. This is because the teacher's own enthusiasm for creative development threads its way through what is provided for the children. Classroom displays celebrate the children's work in a colourful and exciting way. In one lesson observed, the teacher made very good use of imagery to help the children picture what their finished work might look like. In work on display in the Early Years' classroom, children have made fruit prints and striped patterns demonstrating their competence in using tools and materials. There are good opportunities for pupils to express their ideas and feelings through role-play, such as pretending to be doctors and patients in the surgery.

ENGLISH

65. Pupils achieve well to reach well above average standards in all aspects of English by the ages of seven and nine. All pupils reach the levels expected for their age and a large proportion exceed them. Standards are particularly strong in speaking and listening and in reading. Although writing standards are not quite as high, they are improving and more pupils are reaching higher standards than previously. Overall, this represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The successful implementation of the literacy strategy has played an important part. The main strengths are the high quality of teaching in the infant class; the probing discussions that are a feature of many lessons, and the thorough assessments that enable individual targets to be set for every pupil. Strengths in the subject far outnumber the weaknesses. A small number of pupils would benefit from working with others of similar ability in classes with such wide age ranges; opportunities are missed for pupils to redraft their writing to improve it through analysis and discussion. Pupils of all abilities make very good progress in Years 1 and 2. This solid foundation is consolidated through Years 3 and 4.
66. Standards in speaking and listening are very good. Discussions at the beginning and end of lessons are of a high quality. They help pupils to be aware of what they are learning and how they can raise their achievement. Interest and concentration levels during discussions are impressive. In the infant class, the teacher is particularly skilful at encouraging pupils to express their ideas, then using their responses to teach and bring greater understanding to the subject. There is more of a focus on direct instruction in the junior class. Consequently pupils' skills of listening exceed those of speaking. There is a strong emphasis on the use of correct vocabulary. For

example, when words such as 'recount' and 'non-chronological' are introduced, the pupils quickly begin to use them when they speak to the class.

67. Reading is regarded as high priority and standards are high. Infant pupils acquire a good range of strategies to enable them to work out unfamiliar words. For example, they become skilled at sounding out letters or breaking down words into manageable parts to help recognise them. They are encouraged to read with expression and enjoy adopting voices for particular characters to capture their personalities. Computers are used well to extend the reading skills of those needing additional practice. Special reading courses, supervised by classroom assistants, are provided for pupils who find reading difficult. These are very successful and enable them to achieve the levels expected for their age. Many parents also make a significant contribution to developing their children's reading skills throughout the school. In Years 3 and 4, new skills, such as researching for information, are taught well but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in finding information for themselves. With no nearby library, a book club has been introduced. This allows pupils to purchase books on a regular basis and promotes reading both at school and at home.
68. Standards in writing are above average and have improved since the last inspection, although not at as fast a rate as other areas of literacy. Pupils develop fluent writing styles and much good work is produced, in both classes, over the whole year. The strong emphasis on grammar, punctuation and comprehension exercises sometimes overshadows opportunities pupils have to write freely. Consequently, skills developed in literacy lessons are not entirely reflected when pupils write independently. More able infant pupils begin to show flair and confidence, such as in a story where 'They followed the white shimmer of light down steps and through doors and they found the treasure that they so desperately wanted to find'. However, most pupils find it difficult to develop a story line and to express their ideas so fluently. In the junior class, pupils plan out their stories in advance. This helps them to structure their work and to be creative within a set framework. Word processing is also developed, though this is usually to re-write printed stories rather than to improve upon the original text. In art and design, for example, pupils are encouraged to analyse and refine their first designs. However, pupils have few opportunities to undertake similar improvements with their writing and to see their best version displayed.
69. The quality of teaching in the school is good. This is largely the result of very high quality assessment. In the infant class, this is regularly heard in the discussions that take place. Skilled questioning enables the teacher to make constant evaluations of the levels of understanding of each individual. This ensures that basic skills are very well taught, as new learning is very specific to the pupil's need. The rapid progress made by infant pupils is ample testimony to this. In the junior class, the very good assessment is best seen in the marking of pupils' written work. Very thorough notes are maintained to check pupils' progress. In both classes, high quality assessment is used, both to guide the detailed planning of future work and to set very specific targets for each pupil. These targets are well displayed in the front of the pupils' books so that they can be quickly consulted as prompts before written work is attempted. Other strong features of the teaching include the good management of pupils, the skilled use of support staff and resources and the high expectations of behaviour. However, in junior lessons, more able pupils are not given enough encouragement to extend and improve their writing. As a result, their written work tends to lack individuality.
70. The subject is well led by a specialist teacher. She has had a positive impact on identifying those areas most in need of improvement. For example, to raise the profile of writing in the school she invited an American author to speak to the pupils

about her books and how she writes them. This inspired the younger pupils to try to produce books in a similar genre to her own. The subject leader also brings her expertise to benefit the local schools. Her plans for each term are circulated to all the schools. This provides opportunities for the teachers, and occasionally the pupils, to share their ideas and to compare their work. For example, termly review meetings enable the cluster literacy co-ordinators to analyse those elements of the work that are worth repeating and which need to be improved for the next cycle.

MATHEMATICS

71. From a broadly average starting point when pupils enter Year 1, they achieve very well to reach well above average standards in mathematics by the age of seven and at the end of Year 4 when they transfer to Middle School. Pupils achieve high standards for a number of reasons and standards have risen markedly since the last inspection. Principally, teaching in the infant class is very good and pupils make rapid progress. In addition, very effective procedures have been devised to check how well pupils are learning. The results of the many assessments used are carefully analysed to identify any areas that several pupils have found difficult. These are then reinforced until pupils' understanding is secure. Finally, the careful marking of pupils' work further extends the teachers' knowledge of their learning. Any individual difficulties are noted and these are converted into very precise targets to enable pupils to know exactly what it is they need to do to improve. The subject leader provides a very good example of how mathematics should be taught. She is ambitious to maintain and further improve the high standards and has ensured that the National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully implemented. However, her combined role as headteacher and full time class teacher leaves insufficient time to examine pupils' mathematics books to check on the progress they are making elsewhere in the school. There are some minor differences between the classes, such as the amount of attention given to problem solving, which if ironed out, would provide greater consistency and even better achievement. Subject leadership is therefore sound rather than good.
72. Pupils achieve particularly well in the infant class and there are many strengths in the way pupils learn. Every opportunity is taken to make them think. For example, they are asked to estimate and approximate to enable them to gain a reasonable idea of what an answer should be. They are encouraged to compare their estimates with their calculations and, if there are differences, to look again. This helps pupils to gauge the success in their learning. Pupils benefit from very good teaching of the skills of adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing. They become confident in carrying out these operations. More importantly, they are specifically taught, and given extensive practice in solving mathematical problems in written form. This means that they have to read carefully and untangle the question before deciding what to do next. As a result, they become proficient in selecting the correct operation, which prepares them well for the written tests that come later. By the age of seven, almost all pupils are confident, accurate workers who enjoy mathematics.
73. Pupils make steady progress in the junior class. They work productively in improving and extending their calculation skills and developing the correct use of mathematical language. Their knowledge of number and number operations increases well. For example, they learn to convert fractions to decimals successfully. Some of the work done on number and shape is at a high level, such as understanding how to measure angles using protractors. This is more commonly associated with pupils one or two years older. Pupils make good progress in handling data. This is because they use their ICT knowledge frequently to sort and investigate the information fed into computers. That said, pupils' skills of problem solving, established so well in the infant class, do not continue to develop at the same rate. Pupils in the junior class do not have enough opportunities to investigate numbers

and solve problems. Also, they are not always encouraged to look at problems from different perspectives and suggest strategies for solving them, as has been the practice in the infants. As a result, the good progress they make in the knowledge and understanding areas of mathematics is not matched by their ability to use and apply their number skills in solving mathematical problems.

74. The teaching of mathematics is good overall. It is very good in the infant class and is satisfactory with good features in the junior class. In all lessons, teachers manage pupils well and create a positive learning atmosphere, in which pupils concentrate and work hard. Pupils are encouraged to ask when they do not understand and to regard mistakes as part of the learning process. These are good attitudes that enable pupils to gain confidence and show pride in their achievements. Lessons are always well planned and teachers explain at the outset the purpose in what pupils are expected to learn. In an infant lesson, for example, the teacher began by saying, 'Why do we need to measure at all?' The pupils gave some intriguing answers. One pupil explained, 'My father had to measure a new window to make sure that it fitted exactly into the hole in the wall.' This helps pupils to see that mathematics is not an isolated school activity but a series of skills for life. The level of challenge in the content of the work provided is good in both classes and the tasks set are sensitively matched to pupils' different learning needs. This has advantages for quicker and slower learners. For example, in the junior class, one Year 3 pupil usually works with older ones who are at the same level. Pupils with special educational needs are quickly identified and programmes of work are specifically planned to improve their learning. The work in their books contains few errors. This is partly because the work provided is at the right level and also because teachers and classroom assistants work alongside them effectively. This enables them to make good progress. In the infant class, there is a notable emphasis on developing pupils' mental mathematics skills. For example, they are encouraged to count forwards and backwards in twos, fives and tens and to think of different ways to reach an answer. Sharing these ideas in class discussions significantly increases their speaking and listening skills. In the junior class, opportunities to discuss and evaluate different ways to answer questions are more often restricted to the end of lesson discussion sessions. As a result, by the age of nine, although pupils' knowledge and skills of calculation have improved well, their ability to tackle mathematical problems has not progressed to the same degree.

SCIENCE

75. Standards are average at the age of seven as they were at the time of the last inspection. By the time pupils move on to Middle School at the end of Year 4, they have good knowledge and understanding of the different aspects of science but their skills of scientific enquiry are typical of pupils of this age. The subject is soundly led but in a very small school like this one, not enough time is available to check how pupils are learning in all classes and some minor differences go undetected.
76. In the infant class, pupils achieve particularly well in gaining the skills of scientific inquiry. For example, they learn to make accurate predictions of what is likely to happen in scientific experiments and to observe carefully to check the results. Consequently, they are able to draw reasonable and sensible conclusions to explain scientific ideas. Year 1 pupils achieve very well. They try to work at the levels of their Year 2 classmates, even though the work provided is matched to their different needs and ages. In general discussions, they pick up complex ideas. For example, Year 1 pupils predict accurately what will happen to a bulb when an electric circuit is broken. The greater challenge in the work provided for Year 2 pupils is reflected in their ability to help to plan their tests to find out, for example, which colours of materials will fade more quickly. However, Year 2 pupils' knowledge and understanding of the different aspects of science are not at the same high levels.

This is because the more difficult ideas, such as how creatures adapt to their surroundings or how some changes to materials can be reversed and others not, are not included in the school's infant curriculum.

77. In the junior class, pupils' knowledge of the different areas of science, such as living things, materials and forces, develops well. By the age of nine, for example, pupils explain correctly how blood vessels nourish the cells in human muscles, which is not easy to understand. A different picture of achievement emerges in the junior class. Year 3 pupils make good progress. The level of work, initially provided for their Year 4 classmates inspires them. As a result, they can explain how shadows are formed and how animals living within a habitat are dependent on the food chain. They also appreciate the scientific method of proving or disproving ideas. They benefit from being taught how to identify the nature of the problem and how to gather and use the equipment necessary to measure the results. This enables them to make generalisations. For example one pupil wrote, 'The closer to the light you are, the bigger the shadows cast.' However, there is less evidence of pupils discussing and agreeing on which factors ensure that the test is a fair one and very few occasions when pupils predict what they expect to happen. This holds back the development of their ability to plan and carry out their own investigations.
78. Teaching is satisfactory overall with good features in both the infant and the junior classes. Lessons are well prepared and well organised. Pupils understand clearly what they are expected to learn and they are made well aware of any safety issues. This ensures that pupils behave well, listen carefully and approach their work sensibly. The level of challenge in the work provided is invariably high. Quite difficult scientific ideas are tackled, such as the use of symbols in devising diagrams of electric circuits. Pupils respond well and learn to use the correct scientific terms, such as 'rigid', 'flexible' and 'absorbent', when discussing different materials. Pupils record in detail what they have experienced and discovered. Their work is carefully marked to recognise what they have done well and to point out what they could do better. Teachers are good communicators who explain new ideas carefully and ask searching questions to ensure that pupils understand the topic. In the infant class, the teacher is determined to inculcate a sense of discovery. For example, she begins the lesson by saying, 'How can we find the answer to these questions?' Pupils reply with illuminating suggestions, such as, 'Ask an expert', 'Use a special book' and, 'Look closely'. In this class, the work given to pupils is carefully matched to their different learning needs, with the exception that some of the higher areas of learning are not encountered. In the junior class, similar tasks are given to all pupils, irrespective of their different learning needs. Although the level of challenge is high and those who find learning difficult are well supported, the more able pupils could achieve more given encouragement to explore and learn for themselves.

ART AND DESIGN

79. Pupils achieve well to reach standards that are above the levels expected when they reach the ages of seven and nine. Standards are higher than at the time of the last inspection. This is attributable to more effective teaching of skills which ensures that pupils analyse their work carefully and exchange ideas on how it can be improved. The stimulus for much of the work arises from learning in other subjects, such as history, religious education and mathematics. This gives it added relevance and enhances the pupils' interest and creativity.
80. Pupils in the infant class use their sketchbooks very well to experiment with colour and texture in a variety of media. They extend their skills of sketching, painting and printing, showing a mature awareness of shape, tone and pattern. Their ability to capture the style in different works of art is reflected well in their illustrations of characters in the stories inspired by an American author. Good work in mouldable

materials is completed, with pupils even making the play dough which they later use for their modelling! They work with concentration and enthusiasm.

81. Pupils in the junior class take their art equally seriously and also work to high standards. For example, their drawings of figures, using chalk, charcoal and pastel, capture not only the style but also the mood seen in paintings by L S Lowry. One boy explained that a pattern he was developing, by gluing string to cardboard to produce a printing block, was based on a pattern that he had seen on a tile in Aruba in South America. Good teaching was seen in the way that aspects of symmetry, previously studied in mathematics, were extended to work being done in an art lesson. Aspects of rotating, reflecting and transforming were used well in designing a pattern. The work enhanced multicultural understanding by the study of Islamic tessellations. Computers are used well to develop artwork, such as in producing simple block patterns.
82. Teaching is consistently good, especially in the assessments that take place. Comments in the pupils' sketchbooks raise their self-esteem and encourage them to think further about their work. Lessons finish with a close examination of samples of work. Such discussions provide new ideas to ensure that pupils of all abilities are able to express themselves with a freedom and confidence in subsequent lessons. Leadership in the subject is good, with planning being detailed and resources well maintained. Work is very well displayed around the school to create a colourful and stimulating environment. These displays also allow opportunities for the subject leader to monitor the work throughout the school adequately.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

83. Standards are at the levels expected by the time pupils reach the age of seven and transfer, at the age of nine, to the middle school. The picture is not significantly different to that portrayed at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' good art skills enhance their work in design and technology. For example, the clay models are beautifully painted, which significantly improves the appearance of the finished article. The use of design and technology also enhances pupils' learning in other subjects, particularly in history where models of longships and houses deepen pupils' understanding of Vikings. There are also good examples of pupils replicating the skills and techniques of other cultures, such as making Diva candle holders. Subject leadership is sound. The subject leader is keen to raise standards and sets a good example in her own teaching but has little time to observe pupils' learning in other lessons.
84. Pupils achieve well in the infant class in all aspects of the subject. When designing, they produce intricate bird's-eye-view sketches and diagrams, often drawn in perspective, to show what their intended models will look like. Their skills in evaluating products are well developed. This is achieved not only by encouraging them to look critically at their own work but also to make judgements about the quality of commercially produced items, such as leaflets advertising places of interest. These experiences are invaluable as a starting point for pupils' work. For example, their own leaflets, guiding would-be tourists to the school's local area, exhibit many of the characteristics used in the commercial products. As a result, pupils are knowledgeable about the effects of advertising on the consumer. It is difficult to judge the achievement of pupils in the junior class because their work is not retained in folders or books. This is a weakness because neither the pupils nor the teacher can reflect on the progress made. It also makes it more difficult for the subject leader to assess standards throughout the school. However, digital photographs of their finished work indicate that their making skills are good. Some of the ceramic pottery is of a high standard and very original. Pupils learn skills such as weaving, cutting and fastening and apply them well in their projects. However, there

is no evidence to indicate that their design and evaluation skills move on at the same rate.

85. Teaching is satisfactory and there are good features, particularly in the infant class. Teaching in the one lesson seen was good. The teacher very successfully helped pupils to visualise their finished work by asking them to close their eyes and imagine what the puppet's face would look like. From this, they were able to make labelled sketches to guide the making of the puppets. A strong and effective element of teaching is the emphasis on originality. This is achieved by talking to pupils as they work and making comments such as, 'How can you make your puppet different from all of the others.' Another good feature is the presence of adult helpers. Pupils benefit from good opportunities to discuss their work and if they are not sure, an adult is close by to ask. This particularly helps pupils with special educational needs to make good progress.

GEOGRAPHY

86. Pupils reach the standards expected by the end of Years 2 and 4 as they did at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are given many good opportunities to study their local area. This significantly improves their understanding of and interest in environmental issues. Pupils with special educational needs are provided with good levels of support and make good progress.
87. Pupils in the infant class are already developing a good awareness of the importance of some local features. For example, they draw accurate route maps of their journeys to school and because originality is encouraged, they produce colourful and interesting representations. By the end of Year 2, pupils' understanding and confidence is reflected in their critical evaluations of a Macclesfield Tourist Office leaflet and the production of their own attractive pamphlets to encourage people to visit Blackshaw Moor.
88. Good opportunities for practical work through field studies are continued in the junior class where pupils learn how to work out why things are as they are. For example, in their study of the use of land in Upper Hulme and Meerbrook, pupils devise questionnaires to interview residents and write up the results of their survey. They also develop sound map work skills so that by the end of Year 4 the majority of pupils can use four-figure co-ordinates when using grid references.
89. Teaching is satisfactory. Planning is well thought out and ensures that work is interesting and well matched to the mixed age ranges in both classes and to the wide range of ability. A particularly good feature is that lessons are carefully evaluated and teachers make good use of this information to help them plan what pupils need to learn next. However, higher ability pupils in both the infant and junior classes are not provided with enough opportunities to work independently towards the achievement of standards higher than those expected of the majority.
90. Close links with local cluster schools provide good opportunities for teachers to share ideas and exchange resources for learning. This helps to enable the school to identify what works well and what might benefit from improvement. Subject leadership is satisfactory. The subject leader is fully involved in this process and has a good overview of the geography curriculum. However, the co-ordinator does not have enough opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching or standards in pupils' work.

HISTORY

91. Standards are at the levels expected at seven and nine and have been maintained since the last inspection. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to take part in very relevant high quality projects such as building a Viking longhouse and acting out the roles of historical characters. As a result, pupils have a good grasp of historical facts but this is not matched by their skills in finding and sifting information for themselves and their ability to work out some of the factors that have influenced past events. This is particularly evident in the work provided for the juniors, where although pupils with special educational needs are provided with good support and are productive in their work, more able pupils are often restricted in what they are able to do.
92. Infant pupils develop a sound understanding of how the past differs from the present. For example, they explain correctly how people in Victorian times led very different lives, according to whether they were rich or poor. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to discuss and investigate historical clues by being 'history detectives'. In the lesson observed, the pupils' imagination was set alight as they discussed the reasons for the Great Fire of London.
93. Junior pupils acquire extensive knowledge about historical periods by answering questions and recording facts about life in different times. For example, they are able to explain clearly about invaders and settlers in Viking times and they have good knowledge of people's lives during World War 2. In the one lesson observed, pupils examined photographs and a painting to discover clues about the past. This helped them to learn to be historians. However the work in pupils' books over the year, shows that they have comparatively few opportunities to examine evidence from the past and use their power of reasoning to explain what they have discovered. This holds back the development of historical skills.
94. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and their purpose is clearly explained to pupils. As a result, pupils know what they are expected to learn. At the end of the lesson, teachers evaluate how well pupils responded and take this in to account when planning the next lesson. In this way, any difficulties pupils have in understanding are ironed out. Historical knowledge is planned and taught methodically and this results in pupils having a good grasp of facts in the topic they are following. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to extend their skills by investigating historical evidence.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

95. Standards have risen considerably since the previous inspection when they were too low. Standards are now higher than expected by the time that pupils reach the ages of seven and nine. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress. This improvement is due to effective staff training, better computers and software, extensive use of computers in the teaching of other subjects and the decision to appoint a specialist teacher of ICT.
96. Infant and junior pupils enjoy the subject and develop good skills. For example, in an infant lesson they were able to edit their work once it was on screen. When planning lessons, teachers ensure that pupils' different learning needs are well catered for and that they receive the right level of technical support. Junior pupils also benefit from good teaching and they improve their skills. In the lesson observed, for example, Year 3 pupils developed the knowledge and confidence to combine simple graphics and text to create a presentation. Similarly, Year 4 pupils develop good skills in data handling and are able to devise and use a database in which branching choices are made.

97. The quality of teaching is good. Effective planning ensures that pupils are able to build well on skills learned earlier. In addition, their progress is carefully assessed and future teaching is adapted to meet their changing learning needs. Pupils also understand how well they are learning because they each keep a floppy disk of the work they have done during the year. Good use is made of ICT in other subjects. For example, Year 1 and 2 pupils used a programmable toy to improve their understanding of measurement. The school ensures that pupils will not meet with any undesirable images on the Internet. The subject is well led and the subject leader has been central in making the necessary improvements. ICT makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development particularly through the provision of opportunities for pupils to work together.

MUSIC

98. Standards are above the levels expected at the ages of seven and nine. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. The good standards have resulted from a wise financial decision to employ a very skilled visiting teacher to teach music to both classes. This ensures that the subject is well led and pupils' learning is built up systematically as they progress through school.
99. Infant pupils achieve particularly well. They listen intently to different rhythms and to the teacher's changing voices. With very little practice, they are able to sense high and low and long and short sounds and rhythms, almost perfectly. They sing with gusto, but always tunefully, and derive much pleasure from adding the actions to songs such as 'This Old Man.' Their growing musical knowledge and understanding enables them to reason out and anticipate changes in pitch and tempo. For example, when trying to identify which of three bells made the higher, middle and lower sound, one pupil observed, 'There is only one left and it must be the low one.' Pupils continue to make very good progress in the junior class. They sing with great enthusiasm, holding their own part impressively when singing a three part song. The pupils' love of music and their growing self-confidence is evident in the way they improvise and perform for the whole class. They have a good understanding of the symbols used in music, which enables them to record their own compositions using ICT.
100. The teaching of music is excellent. The teacher's expertise and enthusiasm is reflected in the way she inspires the pupils. Lessons are lively and packed with fascinating and engaging activities, such as musical games, which involve playing a wide range of instruments and listening and responding to different types of music. The pace of learning is rapid. As pupils enter the hall, music is already playing. Straightaway, they move into a rotating circle, pacing out different rhythms and stopping at intervals to express exaggerated movements. Pupils are swept along, thoroughly enjoying the experience, and gaining valuable insights into music. The teacher is extremely vigilant. She observes closely and listens very carefully to what pupils say. In this way, she assesses their progress, knows each pupil's capabilities exactly and what must be taught next. Pupils with special educational also achieve very well. They are encouraged and supported well in the lessons. Music plays an important part in the life of the school. In assemblies, for example, music is used to create the atmosphere and pupils develop a good knowledge of composers and of different types of music, including that of other cultures.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

101. Standards are at the level expected for the ages of seven and nine. These findings reflect those at the time of the previous inspection. Lessons are well planned and this ensures that pupils are introduced to new skills in a carefully developed sequence. As a result, pupils of all abilities are able to work at their own level to

practise and improve their skills. Pupils enjoy the lessons, partly because of the good quality resources and the wide range of activities they experience.

102. Infant pupils expend much energy when developing their ball skills. They are given time to repeat rolling balls towards targets and through goals. Regular use is made of demonstration to help pupils appreciate good practice and to compare it with their own. For example, the teacher points out specific features to heighten awareness such as, 'Look how he watched the target all the time as he was rolling the ball'. Pupils in the junior class benefit from a wide range of games activities. They make particularly good progress with swimming. During the last school year, for example, all Year 4 pupils succeeded in swimming the target 25 metres and some exceeded this distance.
103. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory. Teachers show much enthusiasm by attending courses that qualify the school to receive additional equipment in a wide range of sports, such as cricket, hockey, rugby and netball. Good adult support ensures that groups are well supervised across the age ranges represented in each class. Pupils' work is assessed and comments are made on the planning sheets to indicate those individuals in need of extra coaching. New apparatus in the hall provides added opportunities for developing gymnastic skills. Leadership in the subject is sound. Monitoring of standards is rarely undertaken and it is only possible to review the subject on a five-year cycle. However, good plans are in place for developing extra-curricular sports; for involving coaches from local sporting clubs, and; for developing more cluster and inter-school sports. These initiatives are appropriate for the school because they provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills through team competition.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

104. Pupils throughout the school achieve well and continue to work at higher levels than those expected in schools within Staffordshire. The main reason for this is the influence of the headteacher who leads and manages the subject very effectively. She brings a broad experience, an infectious enthusiasm and a personal faith, both to the lessons and to school assemblies. Her ability to draw out pupils' ideas and inner thoughts greatly extends their understanding of the world and of their place within it. As a result, a strong spiritual ethos permeates the work of the school. As co-ordinator of the local schools' cluster, her influence is extended to other schools. For example, the joint Christmas Service, held in churches or chapels in the three villages on an annual rotation, enables a truly communal act of worship to inspire staff and governors, pupils and parents alike.
105. In the infant class, pupils develop a genuine respect and wonder for the world of nature. They go outside to see and to touch trees; they speculate how a tree must feel when it is pruned; they are fascinated to find new growth rising from a tree which had recently been cut down. First hand experiences are the key to much of the new learning. Pupils recall their special moments, such as finding a wonderful tiny apple that was perfectly formed. The discussions are then skilfully linked to the story of a boy who was brought before the prophet Mohammed. He had damaged a tree in his attempts to knock down dates. He was told he was not a bad boy but had done an unkind thing. This is teaching of a very high order. Such learning brings not only new knowledge and understanding of different faiths; it also influences pupils' attitudes and behaviour in a most profound way.
106. In the junior class, pupils extend their understanding of a range of faiths effectively. They acquire a depth of understanding about places of worship, sacred books and objects by visiting churches, a mosque and a synagogue and by meeting followers of different religious faiths. The school has a very good collection of religious

artefacts, representing many different faiths, which significantly enhances pupils' learning. For example, the Qu'ran is handled and discussed with the due reverence and respect that a Moslem would expect. As a result, pupils are helped to gain an awareness of the sacred and spiritual beliefs that are held. They become familiar with the annual festivals of Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism. Especially close links with local churches enable pupils to gain a full understanding of their own Christian heritage.

107. The quality of the teaching is good. It enables the pupils to gain higher levels of knowledge and understanding than is usually gained by their age. Pupils are encouraged to not only learn about religions but also learn from them. This is a strength of the teaching. In one lesson, for example, pupils were asked to 'travel in their minds' to a quiet place where they could think. This was skilfully linked to the story of Mohammed's when he faced a difficult challenge. In this way, pupils were being prepared for challenges in their own lives.